

EXPLORING PREKSHA MEDITATION AS A PATH TO SHALOM FOR PASTORS

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Doctor of Ministry

by

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ABSTRACT

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The objective of this project is to review the current trends leading pastors to abandon their calling and determine how Preksha Meditation, unlike any other meditation, can provide a positive outcome to the problem. Different types of meditations have provided a wide contribution to gain calmness and relieve stress. Preksha Meditation provides a new dimension, contributes to the benefits of meditation research and addresses a variety of concerns by creating internal balance, opening the door to a stronger spiritual life. The research conducted with Preksha Meditation provides a sample of the outcome derived from one session of meditation.

After a single Preksha Meditation experience 51 participants experienced a benefit from the experience. Through self-identification and observation we view how Preksha Meditation strengthens spiritual life, generating closeness to God, providing clarity to move forward with confidence that ultimately leads to enhanced wellness.

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DEDICATION

To India, with its complexity, warmth and vivacious colors; where this journey started.

To Karen Dalton for caring and nurturing my spirit to find the way.

To Susan Guterbock, my first California friend, thank you for sharing what God has provided.

To my one and only son, Anthony, who believes in my endeavors, yet stretches me to see and understand, "Why?"
May God, wisdom and good fortune be with you always.

*To Norman, "Call me Dr. Merchant."
May God be with you, because I can't.*

Introduction

May my spoken words and unspoken thoughts be pleasing to you, O Lord my Rock and my Redeemer.

-Psalm 19:14

Introduction

Serving as a deaconess for over a decade with the United Methodist Church has provided me the opportunity to work with pastors at home and abroad in a variety of ministries. Throughout the last few years I have experienced a decline in the vibrancy of pastors within the United States. According to experts in the field this decline is happening across denominations.¹ With a mindful attitude and a compassionate heart, I set out to analyze the situation by observing and listening to religious leaders tell their stories to determine the cause of the decline. What I saw and heard was a group that was unhappy with the environment of religion, church politics, their workload, and the loneliness accompanying the position, ultimately leading to health issues. Some pastors were able to articulate the way they felt and why; while others simply stated there was “something missing” or they felt stagnant and unable to move forward.

To support my observation, I investigated research findings nationwide and companies, such as PastorServe and the Barna Group, to see if their findings coincided with mine. PastorServe, a seventeen year old nonprofit organization; with a ministry to help pastors, has observed the same deficits amongst the lives of pastors. In 2015 the ministry at PastorServe was requested by more ministers than in previous years. They are happy to be the sanctuary to help pastors throughout the United States.² There are many factors causing the deterioration of pastoral exuberance. This emptiness is not unique to pastors. I chose pastors because of their unique situation of being in a profession which congregations, communities, and individuals look to them to be Christ-like and leaders, while simultaneously undervaluing their worth as soul keepers. Dr. Ian Gawler, the author of *Meditation Pure & Simple*, labeled this emptiness as

¹ Jimmy Dodd, *Survive or Thrive: 6 Relationships Every Pastor Needs* (Kansas City, MO: David Cook, 2015), 141.

² Jimmy Dodd, “The Year in Review,” PastorServe (December 20, 2015), accessed February 1, 2017, <http://www.pastorserve.net>.

“coping” and states, “although basically well, people are feeling below par. There is a common feeling of just ‘coping.’”³

To continue with my quest to understand this discontent, I spent a few days in a secluded resort with pastors from different denominations at a spiritual retreat offering prayer, meditation, healing, and open dialogue. This particular group served as an example of dissatisfied pastors. This is where reality took hold of me. Pastors in their raw honesty divulged the lack of a prayerful life. To my dismay, I learned that not all pastors have a spiritual life. The reasons were plentiful and the situation was real. They wanted to recapture their closeness to God, which each had at some point in their ministries, but had lost because of their congregations, other priorities, time and/or illness. The sad reality led to Bibles (scripture) being used for exegesis, to ensure accuracy of quotes for sermons, but not for prayer, to enrich or nurture their spirituality.

According to David Kinnaman, Barna President, during the conference on *The State of Pastors*, two-thirds (61 percent) of the pastors interviewed “were spiritually at high risk.”⁴ The pastors themselves self-identified as not being spiritually content. It is not clear to pastors and to congregations that “the greatest leverage in ministry is a healthy self.”⁵ At the same conference in a conversation amongst pastors, they agreed, “the consistency of pastors’ spiritual practice correlates to overall satisfaction.”⁶ Pastors in general are demonstrating a loss in faith, which is leading to the decline of the profession.

In a conversation with Clark Tanner, Regional Executive Director-Northwest Region for PastorServe, confirms pastors are leaving their ministries to the tune of “1500 per month...for

³ Ian Gawler, *Meditation Pure & Simple* (New Delhi: New Age Books, 2009), 19.

⁴ Barna Group and Pepperdine University, *The State of Pastors 2017*, live webcast on January 26, 2017, <https://www.barna.com>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

various reasons.”⁷ “Sunscape Ministries of Colorado reported that in all denominations nationwide, 1,600 ministers per month are terminated or forced to resign.”⁸ According to Marble Retreat Center, “more than 2,000 pastors are leaving the ministry each month.”⁹ “A 2005 survey of clergy by the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church also took special note of a quadrupling in the number of people leaving the profession during the first five years of ministry.”¹⁰ Depending upon the research group, the numbers vary. Regardless, they are bleak and alarming. The problem is definitely nationwide; one that has increased and is seen in different pockets of the world since the turn of the century. Churches are losing members and pastors are leaving in droves. What exactly is going on within the church?

Each aspect mentioned above chips away at the foundation of a pastor’s life. Years of research conducted by Peter C. Hill and Kenneth I. Pargament have placed a spotlight on the correlation between religion/spirituality and health. “It is now known that religion is linked to physical and mental health.”¹¹ While the reason why is unclear, the finger points toward lack of faith, a deficit in spending time with God, both physically and mentally, and allowing for guidance. The evidence in each situation mentioned is manifesting itself in obesity, depression, hypertension, and diabetes, to name a few. The findings are not specific to one denomination, nor a situation experienced only in the United States. The situation is widespread. Researcher Kathryn Rhodes Meek and her team from Wheaton College conducted a research study on 398 pastors and learned that the small percentage of pastors that are happy are intentionally

⁷ Clark Tanner, (PastorServe-Regional Executive Director-Northwest Region), interviewed by Rosa Linda Guadarrama, April 25, 2017.

⁸ Christopher D. Schmitz, *Why Your Pastor Left* (Christopher D. Schmitz, 2016): 20.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁰ Paul Vitello, “Taking A Break From The Lord’s Work,” *The New York Times*, August 1, 2010, accessed September 17, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/02/nyregion/02brnout.html>.

¹¹ Peter C. Hill and Kenneth I. Pargament, “Advances in the Conceptualization and Measurement of Religion and Spirituality: Implications for Physical and Mental Health Research,” *American Psychologist* 58, no. 1 (January 2003): 64–74, doi:10.1037/0003-066X.58.1.64. 72.

maintaining a balanced life and never losing sight of God, keeping the relationship in the forefront. These two elements are exemplified by those who have been successful in their calling.

One significant reason pastors have a dwindling spiritual life is because they are overworked and fail to spend time with self and God. Pastors are responsible for communities, congregations, programs, counseling, and bringing congregants closer to God. The pastors' first charge is to serve God, yet once in a church they are to serve as "professional generalists,"¹² serving in every area to ensure the progress and wellbeing of the physical and programmatic aspects of the church. Pastors give of themselves, while multitasking as CEOs, COOs, directors and shepherds; a list of demanding complexities on diverse sides of the spectrum. Pastors in their eagerness to serve forget to care for themselves. In the words of Gary L. Harbaugh, author of *Pastor As Person*, "Most difficulties pastors face in the parish arise when the pastor forgets that he or she is a person."¹³ In their zeal to serve, they forget their humanness. In their aspiration to do the work they have committed to do, they strive diligently "to please and be accepted by others."¹⁴ When all else fails, where do they go to get replenished? Who helps them?

Due to the shame and embarrassment attached to the stigma of needing help and the appearance of incompetence, pastors suffer in silence. They don't seek counseling. Without the willingness to share and seek help, pastors may be reluctant to take personal health issues to their superior, Board, District Superintendent, etc. This leads to the question, who is taking care of the caretaker?

¹² Bruce Epperly, *A Center in the Cyclone: Twenty-first Century Clergy Self-Care* (New York: T & T Clark International), Kindle, 114.

¹³ Gary L. Harbaugh, *Pastor As Person* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), Kindle, 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

To excel as a pastor, one must multi-task at a variety of administrative skills or delegate well, deal with whatever comes your way, be personable if not charismatic, lead people to Christ, maintain an intact family, and take care of oneself, while taking care of others. Good health can provide the foundation to think clearly and act in accordance with best practices, keeping the job separate from personal life, yet caring for self. In the words of professor, author, and compassion guru, Frank Rogers, “When we are fully alive, we are less reactive. Self-care increases our care for others.”¹⁵ However, by neglecting pastors and not correcting the problems made apparent for years, churches are contributing to the growing numbers of unhealthy pastors, diminishing churches, and a culture that devalues the work of spirituality.

At times, the demise of the institution is in direct proportion to the decline of a pastor’s salary and/or benefit package. This decline can be temporary or ongoing. The fact of the matter is that the leader, the shepherd, takes backstage and becomes the stepchild, the one to do without when financial situations become problematic. Finances attached to the church reflect upon the pastor and finances attached to the pastor’s salary fall upon him/her as well. According to Cheri Cowell’s article, “The Pastor’s Struggle with Personal Finances,” “In July 2015 Grey Matter Research surveyed 4,249 pastors and discovered that 50 percent receive less than \$50,000 per year in compensation with 30 percent having student loan debt averaging \$36,000. Thirty-three percent have under \$10,000 in retirement funds, and 29 percent have \$0 in personal savings.”¹⁶

Churches must remember that leaders are to be fairly compensated for the work they do, not because they have a family to feed and school loans to pay off, but because they have a demanding position worthy of a leader’s salary. The preparation for the position is based on

¹⁵ Frank Rogers, Jr., *Practicing Compassion* (Nashville, TN: Fresh Air Books, 2015), 40.

¹⁶ Cheri Cowell, “The Pastor’s Struggle with Personal Finances,” *Pastor Resources*, December 22, 2016, accessed May 17, 2017, www.pastorresources.com.

education and the ordination process. The respect bestowed upon a pastoral leader is not only as a servant of Christ, listening to a calling from God, but also for the years of preparing and commitment to serve. Those going into ministry realize the short comings of the position. However, it was a calling and there was a drive to serve with goodness and an open heart, prepared to excel. Some knew the monetary compensation was small, but the love in their hearts and their desire to serve encouraged them through the threshold of the profession. There are pastors with excellent packages including, health, housing, pension, and travel. In these cases the level of unhappiness can be such that they choose to leave. Having a worthy compensation package does not off-set loneliness or feeling underappreciated.

In *Why Your Pastor Left*, author and theologian Christopher D. Schmitz quotes his pastor friends as stating, “Being a Pastor is the hardest, most under-appreciated, most underpaid job that you will ever love.”¹⁷ In spite of love for God and love for profession it is difficult to stay the course when there is little to give. The original reason for accepting the call can be dimmed by the law of survival and the urgent need to flee.

However, what is most egregious and should outrage us to the core is the fact that we allow those serving God to be treated poorly. During the last three years according to the *Clergy Health Survey*, pastors have self-reported that they are in good health, but their overall health is below the average American adult. Depression has slightly risen and there is “some functional difficulty from depressive symptoms – also higher than the benchmark.”¹⁸ The work of a clergy person is demanding and taxing. To add to the complexity, few provide a clear demarcation of set hours and thus have congregations that think they are available whenever needed, whatever

¹⁷ Schmitz, *Why Your Pastor Left*, Kindle, 148.

¹⁸ Wespeth Benefits/Investments, *Clergy Health Survey*, Center for Health, Well-Being Survey of The United Methodist Church, 2017 Report, accessed December 30, 2017, <http://www.gbophb.org/cfh>.

time of day or night, making them the emergency go-to person. Doctors who are available to serve 24/7 are paid to be on call and still pass their call onto colleagues for their well-needed respite. Pastors' time must be valued and respected. It is in the demanding diversity, commingling of time and loneliness of the position that the malady grows and festers, leading pastors to be unhappy. It appears, as in the words of Zechariah 13:7, the shepherd is receiving a strike and the sheep are scattering.¹⁹

Pastors are in churches to provide pastoral care to the congregation and lead souls to be closer to God. Bruce Epperly says it perfectly in his first chapter of *A Center in the Cyclone*: “Pastoral ministry is a sacred task... We are also representatives of God, called to shape our lives in accordance with the way of Jesus. Our role is to care for people, body, mind, and spirit, and this means that our primary relationships with congregants are mediated through our commitment to their spiritual care and well-being.”²⁰

For churches to grow and be dynamic, well-balanced clergy are required. Congregations are the most important aspect of the Church. However, a strong pastor with their eyes set on God, leading a flock to believe in the Lord is essential. Pastors realize their work is a calling, but they forget to be with God. It is throughout this professional lifespan that nurturing must take place. While pastors are in the midst of their profession, appreciation, fair compensation and nurturing must take place if they are to be the religious leaders the church needs.

One of the ways pastors can be nurtured is with Preksha Meditation. It is not a miracle cure, but a simple meditation technique which provides balance, clarity and awareness, while drawing one closer to God. Preksha Meditation promotes inner calmness as do all meditations, in

¹⁹ Zechariah 13:7 (NSRV)

²⁰ Epperly, *A Center in the Cyclone: Twenty-First Century Clergy Self-Care*, Kindle, 285.

many cases and draws us closer to the creator. It provides a true transformation that is healing, nurturing and creates awareness leading to clarity in everything we do. This happens as a result of the increase inner unity built by breathing, finding inner awareness; ultimately growing in unity with self and God through time together.

It is my hypothesis that incorporating Preksha Meditation to a prayerful life will serve as a tool to bring pastors closer to God, enhance spiritual life, and provide focus, leading to wellness. Preksha Meditation serves to create harmony and balance in a body that is off balance and diseased. For years there were no conversations about meditation drawing one closer to God, instead the conversation was around the inertia created from within, as in the one found in spiritual leaders such as monks who meditate most of the day and are elevated to a higher plain of consciousness. I have personally felt through Preksha Meditation closeness to God that grows with each session and that leaves me balanced. This is not to say that I am free of disease or calm to the point I can't be befuddled. It simply means with constant meditation it is easier to heal, find the center of balance, and maintain homeostasis, while drawing closer to God. The term "God" denotes any divine being that one holds at that level. Researchers Hill and Pargament, in seeking information as to spirituality and health, drew the conclusion that in gaining attachment to God, health improved.

To know God is...the central function of religion...there are good theoretical reasons to believe that a felt connection with God may be tied to better health status...Attachment theory suggests that people who experience a secure connection with God should also experience greater strength and confidence in everyday life...However, these measurers of perceived closeness to God have been significant predictors of mental health and physical health.²¹

²¹ Hill and Pargament, 67.

Through meditation one enters a realm of calmness and a “higher” level of self-realization. With continuous practice the level of awareness is reinforced. Meditation might not be the sole answer for everyone, but has been scientifically researched and proven to have a direct correlation with certain ailments and stress.²² As an added benefit, meditation increases mindfulness, in which one becomes aware and united with the surroundings and all of creation. Preksha Meditation will provide a clear vision of abilities and allow one to accept challenges as the leaders of faith communities. The clarity generated aids in fulfilling a full life in union with nature and the creator.

Healthy clergy are a blessing to themselves, their families, their congregations, and the overall community they serve. They serve as a model for their denominations and by making disciples. When pastors are vibrant with their calling, they are a special gift to all. To get to that point takes daily work and maintenance through self-care, prayer, and meditation. To care for oneself requires constant and deliberate attention. When stress is upon us we must have substantial neurons within our brain to know that deep breathing will allow for a flood within our internal highway to carry oxygen and place us in a position of balance to rethink the situation from another perspective. Preksha Meditation, like other meditations, is a guided exercise; however, this unique meditation aids in relieving psychosomatic diseases, while linking body, mind, and spirit. With one fully engrossed session, and surely with repeated sessions, one can experience change.

The metaphor that comes to mind to lend simplicity to the situation is one of yoga. Most people start yoga classes to release stress and increase self-awareness. Regardless of other factors

²² Pradyumna Singh Shekhawat, Yuvraj Singh Khangarot, and J.P.N. Mishra, “Influence of Preksha Meditation on Blood Profile of Adults,” *International Journal of Yoga and Allied Sciences*, 1, no. 2 (2012): 102.

that are not going well in their lives, the belief is that by focusing on these two elements, life will be better. In reality, during the continuous daily *asanas*, or posture, the two elements one wishes to change will change, but there will be other noticeable differences as well. To a greater or lesser extent, there will be a difference in balance, breathing, flexibility, mindfulness, and compassion. The same applies here. Decline in vibrancy, health, finances, and loneliness are the main issues disrupting the lives of pastors, there are other issues to be rectified as well. The overall issue here is to change oneself from the inside out. The changes seen after embracing Preksha Meditation will help serve all areas because of the inter-connection and the correlation of every aspect that is leading to the overall decline.

Can Preksha Meditation help to revive the spiritual lives of pastors and increase their wellbeing? If so, we can provide this technique to pastors to serve as a proactive tool to remain vibrant in their ministries, increase their self-worth, improve overall health, and draw them to a richer spiritual life. This will lead to stronger leaders, enriching the foundation of religious entities.

To support the thesis statement there will be four chapters:

Chapter Two will serve to address the many types of research conducted on meditation. Not all studies will serve as a stepping stone to further research, but each will address a different aspect of meditation and will address why, regardless of outcome, it serves toward the advancement of meditation research.

Chapter Three will address the origins and development of Preksha Meditation. In this chapter I will delve into the technique. This chapter will also capture the transformation in body, mind, and spirit because of meditation overall, and Preksha Meditation specifically. It will also

address scientifically how the brain and mind work in tangent to solidify new habits/techniques. Captured here will be the primary work leading to the physical meditation sessions.

Chapter Four will address the research conducted, provide anecdotes and observations. The findings will be addressed and displayed on graphs for clear and easy visuals offering an analysis of the materials gathered from the questionnaires.

The Conclusion will serve to state findings, provide recommendations and discuss future pathways to enhance findings.

Appendix 1 has a copy of the questionnaire used provided to “human subjects.”

Appendix 2 has a graph of the “superhuman benefits of meditation” from comfortpit.com.

Bibliography

Chapter Two

It brings mental caliber for purpose and prosperity of life.

-Yogi Bhajan

Situation Leading to Research

Meditation has been known to humankind since before Jesus walked on the earth. A few Indian traditions were maintained in secrecy and handed down from generation to generation until the late 1960s (the dawn of the Aquarian age) when Yogi Bhajan came to California and shared his wisdom on meditation, (ध्यान/*dhyana*) breathing techniques, (प्राणायाम/*prāṇayāma*) and yoga poses (आसन/*asanas*) with westerners. He shared his *Kundalini* teachings, providing what he believed was the fountain of youth. Practitioners experience longevity through flexibility of the body by longer time and working toward a youthful mind, that is pure, simple and uncluttered from what is truly unimportant. The added time in longevity is to perfect and increase our time with self.

Yogi Bhajan realized that not everyone could embrace all aspects of his teachings, but gave it all, allowing each person to nibble or take a morsel, while others devoured the entire meal.²³ As in all things, it is important to listen to one's body, stretching to breathe deeper, longer, but also know when you have reached your limits and have had enough, or in some cases need to take the two steps back to continue forward. As body, mind, and soul are united, yoga postures invite flexibility, which brings about awareness to the body and deepens what meditation reconfigures in the brain, while uniting internal self with the universal self.

Meditations in general, within different traditions, both derived from the east and the west, come in a variety of styles, with different durations, and varied outcomes; each with the promise of helping in one area or another, but each guaranteed to place you in a calm state. Each

²³ Shakti Parwha Kaur Khalsa, *Kundalini Postures and Poetry: An Illustrated Handbook of Classic Yoga Poses As Taught by the Master Yogi Bhajan*, Ph.D. (New York: The Berkley Publishing Group, 2003), 7.

meditation sparks a different area of the brain while realizing the internal benefit of calmness and energizing life force, thus increasing our love and compassion toward humanity.

Due to the small sample size of most research studies and the variety of outcomes; it has been difficult to determine the actual benefits of meditation. In the United States, Mindfulness Meditation appears to be the style most revered. Since the subjects have been few and finances limited, many “meta-analyses,” (a statistical analysis that looks at a combination of scientific research results) have been conducted where research within a subject matter, in this case meditation, are gathered and reviewed; reviewing the work of the original researcher.

In this chapter I intend to provide the reader with a spectrum of research findings, through the scientific outcome of several meditation practices. There are meditations with little to no effect, while there are others that lead to a state of calmness, opening other avenues. Chapter 3 unravels the concept of shalom and how Preksha Meditation is not only different from other meditations, but how it provides a wide scope of benefits, beyond others, leading one to a state of well-being, peace, and providing a path to be closer to God.

In many instances the phrase, “mindfulness meditation” is stated throughout this chapter. This again is a bit problematic since there are “mindful meditations” that have existed for years mainly attached to Eastern philosophy and religious traditions. “Mindfulness Meditation,” (MM) as made famous by Jon Kabat-Zinn will be clarified when used. To add, many researchers use the term mindfulness as a blanket, not differentiating the precise type of meditation. This lack of consistency gets extremely confusing when reading the research findings by various meta-analyses, because they are not clear as to the elements that determine the particular group of research being reviewed. In many situations categorizing the meditation is not always clear.

For clarity, all meditations are listed as meditation and Mindfulness Meditation, is capitalized since that one appears to be the one most researched. Below I will share research findings from meta-analysis, supporting articles, single research and finally provide what corporate America has to say after including meditation into the workforce. I will conclude with Preksha Meditation and how the hypothesis in question analyzes meditation from a different perspective and provides a novel outcome. Displayed is a wide variety of what is being analyzed in the research world when it comes to meditation.

All findings are recent, with the exception of the Dalai Lama's request. I chose this one for three reasons; first, it is one of the most interesting cases to date and demonstrates how cultures entrenched in tradition know what they know, but, at times are unable to prove it or articulate with evidence. They feel it and are indeed correct. Second, it is evidenced that science is lagging when it comes to meditation; it is trying to catch up, but is not always cognoscente of how or where to grasp. Third, because it was a perfect segue to Dr. Josipovic's work; providing an insight into prior findings.

In a meta-analysis systematic review, Madhav Goyal and his colleagues from the Department of Medicine at John Hopkins University conducted research to investigate the findings of mindfulness by reviewing 47 clinical trials from 2012. In these 47 trials, there were a total of 3,515 participants and the studies ranged from three weeks to 5.4 years. Participants were reviewed by two independent reviewers. Different modalities of meditation were reviewed. The conclusion was "low evidence of improved stress/distress and mental-health-related to quality of life. We found low evidence of no effect or insufficient evidence of any effect of meditation programs on positive mood, attention, substance use, eating habits, sleep, and weight. We found

no evidence that meditation programs were better than any active treatment.”²⁴ The end conclusion, while having low support for meditation overall, ranked MM slightly above the others.

Researchers from RAND Corporation, a leading think tank, also conducted meta-analysis, with 28 clinical trials to determine if MM helped to alleviate pain from: migraines, fibromyalgia, rheumatoid arthritis, and back pain, to name a few. They determined that, “Mindfulness meditation was associated with a small effect of improved pain symptoms. The low quality of evidence prevents any strong conclusions about mindfulness meditation for chronic pain.” Under these findings it was determined, in subgroup analyses of comparators, mindfulness meditation significantly reduced pain scale scores compared with treatment as usual, but not compared with passive controls, such as waitlists, or with education or support groups.”²⁵

In 2015, two doctoral students from Italy conducted research on 29 clinical trials to determine if MM changed personalities toward a better perspective of self. Scientist Cristiano Crescentini and Viviana Capurso from the Department of Human Sciences at the University of Udine; determined that while MM had been researched for almost three decades, research was still unsophisticated. However, they found enough evidence to state, “it appears that this form of meditative practice may notably shape individual’s personality and self-concept toward more healthy profiles.”²⁶ With a meta-analysis of 29 clinical trials one is likely to find flaws inherent in the findings; however, the random samples provided enough evidence for the researchers to state

²⁴ Madhav Goyal et al., “Meditation Programs for Psychological Stress and Well-being: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis,” *JAMA Int. Med.* 174, no. 3 (January 6, 2014): doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2013.13018.

²⁵ Margaret A. Maglione et al., “Mindfulness Meditation for Chronic Pain: A systematic review,” Rand National Defense Research Institute (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2016), accessed February 18, 2017, <https://www.rand.org>.

²⁶ Cristiano Crescentini and Viviana Capurso, “Mindfulness Meditation and explicit and implicit indicators of personality and self-concept changes,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 6, no. 44 (January 2015): <http://www.frontiersin.org>.

that, “this form of mental training may significantly shape individuals’ personality toward a more coherent and healthy sense of self and identity.”²⁷ Changes in personalities were determined by a self-reporting system, “the Temperament and Character Inventory,” and findings determined may be linked to the fact of realizing the self differently, not as permanent or settled, but rather as “transitory” and not “constant and unchanging.”²⁸

In reviewing the three meta-analyses we are provided with evidence that two researchers find little to no reward in meditation, while the later one shows it to be beneficial and potent enough to change personalities.

According to an article generated by the *Greater Good Magazine*, “they found that meditation programs resulted only in small to moderate reductions in anxiety, depression and pain...although these efforts are small, they are ‘comparable with what would be expected from the use of an antidepressant in a primary care population but without the associated toxicities...’” According to the authors, meditation programs were not shown to be more beneficial than active treatments – such as exercise, therapy, or taking prescription drugs.”²⁹ This article is congruent with the findings determined by scientist Crescentini and Capurso.

In 2014, based on the findings of 21 brain imaging studies, scientist, K.C. Fox and his fellow researchers suggest that “different modalities of meditations affect different parts of the brain.”³⁰ Not all meditations are created equal. Every meditation provides relief in the area of stress and some provide greater benefits in other areas. When the area of specificity is matched

²⁷ Ibid., 1.

²⁸ Ibid., 1.

²⁹ Hooria Jazaieri, “What we still don’t know about mindfulness meditation,” *Greater Good Magazine*, February 7, 2017, accessed February 18, 2017, <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu>.

³⁰ K.C. Fox, et al. “Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews,” 43 (June 2014): 48-73, accessed February 8, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2014.03.016>.

with the subject's needs the outcomes are best. Without a doubt, tailored meditations work best. When a meditation is created just for you based on what you are trying to correct/accomplish, the outcome increases. However, they did find that "awareness" is linked to the prefrontal cortex. "A 6-week mindfulness based intervention was found to correlate with a significant grey matter increase within the precuneus. Interestingly a positive relationship has been found between the volume of grey matter in the right precuneus and the subject's subjective happiness score."³¹

While shopping around for the right meditation might seem like a weird concept, it is important to not only find the right one, but one that feels comfortable, can be done effortlessly and produces the effects sought for health reasons, calmness, and/or changing personality traits. The scientific weight of conclusively determining which part of the brain vibrates from the meditation is substantial. This can lead to the combination of specific meditations to increase/stimulate different parts of the brain that may help to end Alzheimer's, Dementia, and Parkinson's to name a few.

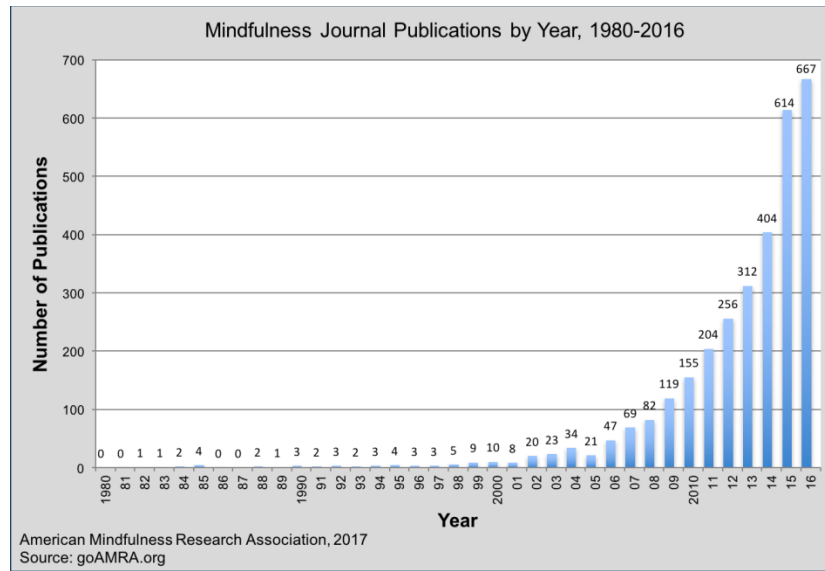
In recent years there has been tremendous interest in meditation. In the 1970s, articles on meditation were difficult to find. Since 2014 the numbers have increased, with 1,113 articles published in 2016.³² Although not reflective of the same numbers, but definitely demonstrating a drastic increase, the graph below from the American Mindfulness Research (AMRA), demonstrates at a glance the increase and interest in the field.³³

³¹ "Research on Meditation," Wikipedia, accessed February 18, 2017, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Research_on_meditation.

³² Daniel Goleman and Richard J. Davidson, *Altered Traits* (New York: Penguin Random House LLC, 2017), Kindle, 197.

³³ *American Mindfulness Research Association (AMRA)*, 2017, accessed October 18, 2017, <https://www.goamra.org>.

Table 1 1



With the huge interest and large number of articles written, it is now common knowledge that most meditations help to calm the body and reduce anxiety. What are recently being studied are the ramifications that the brain undergoes while in meditation and how it plays out after the meditation session.

Through a combined effort with the University of Southern California, Alliant International University and University of California San Diego, Chopra Foundation, and Indiana University School of Medicine, a three-month yoga and meditation research retreat was conducted with 38 participants. On a daily basis the participants worked and did a variety of meditations in combination with gentle Hatha yoga (mainly breathing and chanting). The results revealed “significant improvements...as well as each of the subscores which included depressive..., anxious...and somatic...symptoms. In addition, there was an increase in mindfulness as assessed by the Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory.”³⁴ Freiburg Mindfulness Inventory, FMI, is a well-accepted and useful questionnaire to determine mindfulness. The

³⁴ B. Rael Cahn et al., “Yoga, Meditation and Mind-Body Health: Increased BDNF, Cortisol Awakening Response, and Altered Inflammatory Marker Expression after a 3-Month Yoga and Meditation Retreat,” *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 11 no. 315 (June 26, 2017): 1-13, doi:10.3389/fnhum.2017.00315.

overall findings altered psychological and neurotrophic findings, “suggesting enhanced stress resilience and well-being.”³⁵ The brain derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a member of the neurotrophin gene family, demonstrated the growth of new neurons. “BDNF signaling has been implicated as a mediator of the positive impact of both physical exercise and cognitive engagement on brain fitness and enhanced neurogenesis, learning and memory...as well as antidepressant effects.”³⁶

In another study conducted by Naveen, et al. in 2013 there proved to be a direct correlation between a decrease in depression and an increase BDNF after yoga.³⁷ The three-month research study had a rich variety of helpful elements including three freshly-made vegetarian meals per day. The diet part of the research was undervalued. A proper diet is paramount to human existence and three months is surely ample time to denote a difference in a controlled environment with light exercise, and a spectrum of meditation sessions and Hatha yoga per day. In many ways and in a general sense, the setting above is the ideal Ayurvedic lifestyle. An Ayurvedic lifestyle is the ideal setting to live by: healthy eating, light work, communal living, with daily meditation and yoga.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, biologist, author, and the developer of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction has limited his work to MM. When added modalities are needed he resorts to yoga and body scanning, but not other types of meditations. These studies have been conducted at his clinic and hospitals to relieve disease and stress. In a *Time* magazine article, “The Art of being Mindful,” Kate Pickert concluded that “Mindfulness meditation is becoming popular among

³⁵ Ibid., 6.

³⁶ Ibid., 7.

³⁷ Ibid., 7.

people who would not normally consider meditation.”³⁸ Lara Hilton, scientist and researcher, used Mindfulness meditation for stress and chronic pain, but as with Kabat-Zinn the studies are limited to how meditation reduces stress and pain. The practice of meditation is not one size fits all. This is an important aspect the public should take in to consideration. When Mindfulness meditation does not bear the fruit it is reported to provide, perhaps another method of meditation can gain the results sought, while changing the brain into betterment with repeated practice. The more you practice, the more you reap.

Over a decade ago, in what became a renowned research project, the Dalai Lama invited Richard J. Davidson and his team from the University of Wisconsin, a crew of scientists and meditative experts, to his monastic community to learn about their daily contemplative concentration technique and how “mind control” is experienced. During the visit eight monks and ten volunteers were provided with an Electroencephalography (EEG). The monks were to focus “in a state of unconditional loving kindness and compassion,”³⁹ while the volunteers were to focus on someone they loved. The results of the monks reflected gamma band (EEG results) ranging from 25-42 oscillations a second. These findings are parallel to active neurons, “typically associated with focusing attention.”⁴⁰ The gamma waves as reflected in the left prefrontal cortex displayed by the monks, were stronger based on their meditative span and were thirty times greater than in novices.⁴¹

This research shed insight as to the basic brain activity of inner silence, but didn’t spotlight its benefits. During this research the monks were told that the study was to learn about

³⁸ Kate Pickert, “The Art of Being Mindful,” *Time Inc.* 183, no.4 (2015): accessed October 1, 2017, <https://www.scientificamerica.com>.

³⁹ Christof Koch, “Neuroscientist and the Dalai Lama swap insights on Meditation,” *Scientific American Mind*, July 1, 2013, accessed February 18, 2017, <https://www.scientificamerica.com>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

compassion, it is said that the monks were laughing wondering why the focus of the research was on the brain, when the true results are generated from the heart.⁴²

Here we are 15 years later and now know that the heart is constantly in communication with the brain and plays an equal role in the meditation process and results. In fact, when it comes to feelings, the body works in combination, “what we experience as an emotion is the result of the brain, heart, and body acting in concert.” because the heart, “is linked to...health, vitality and well-being.”⁴³

To further enhance meditation research on those who meditate a great part of the day, Zoran Josipovic, scientist and professor at New York University has conducted research on twenty fellow monks, (seasoned meditators) to determine how the brain realigns during meditation. His subjects meditate while in the Magnetic Resonance Imaging machine (MRI), measuring the brains blood flow.⁴⁴ Dr. Josipovic in his continued research is “hoping to find how meditators achieve a state of “nonduality” or “oneness” with the world, a unifying consciousness between a person and their environment.”⁴⁵ It is Josipovic’s hypothesis that the reorganization of the brain is directly related with the “deep harmony between themselves and their surroundings, which is manifested in actuality by the “ability to churn both the internal and external networks in the brain concurrently.”⁴⁶ This default component of the brain upon further research studies may give rise to further knowledge on Autism, since it is believed to be the same part of the brain.

⁴² Goleman, Kindle, 3152.

⁴³ HeartMath Institute, “An Appreciative Heart is Good Medicine,” July 2, 2009, accessed February 18, 2017, <https://www.heartmath.org>.

⁴⁴ Matt Danzico, “Brains of Buddhist monks scanned in meditation study,” *BBC News*, April 24, 2011, accessed October 27, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com>.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

The trend we are seeing in the last few findings is that when researchers know specifically what they are seeking and capture the right elements to look at the results are noteworthy; when specific findings correlate with the meditation, favorable conclusions are delivered. Dr. Josipovic is delving into the true essence of meditation, regardless of style. He is asking the difficult question, “What makes it possible to become aware of the inner self, as to bring in the external to unite as one?” The combination of the right question and the correct research is taking off to make all the difference. It is these findings that bring about a positive light and creates the momentum behind meditation.

Author and psychologist, Robert Wright, gives credit to the state of calmness and believes it to be an asset to meditation. However, it is the after effects and the ability to view life from a different perspective that is most beneficial. One is able to view situations from a clearer view, “changing your relationship to the unpleasant feelings in ways that not only take some of the unpleasantness out of them but gives you a better focus and an actual clearer view of the world.”⁴⁷ This clear state of mind is reflected in the calmness within that allows one to focus, view the situation for what it is worth and not overreact. When one reaches a certain level of familiarity with meditation, the calm can be restored at any time with a few deep breaths and focusing on an “attitude adjustment.” The mind remembers where information is stored in the brain and can easily locate the necessary data to reinforce the behavior.

The final research to highlight is, The Shamatha Project, it is the most complete in its quest to seek the “psychological and physiological process,” after intensive meditation.⁴⁸ Sixty healthy adults were invited to a 3-month retreat or to participate in a control group which entered

⁴⁷ David Anderson, “An evolutionary psychologist explains what happens inside our brain when we meditate and how that changes over time,” *Business Insider*, October 26, 2017, accessed October 28, 2017, <https://www.businessinsider.com>.

⁴⁸ Clifford Saron, “The Shamatha Project.” The Saron Lab, Center for Mind and Brain, University of California Davis, accessed October 31, 2017, <https://www.saronlab.ucdavis.edu>.

the retreat afterwards, periodically. Each participant practiced meditation in solitude for six hours per day. “Initial results show that intensive contemplative training sharpens and sustains attention, enhanced well-being, and leads to less judgmental, more empathetic emotional responding to the suffering of others.”⁴⁹ All participants showed improvements, whether noticeable or self-reported via questionnaire.

When it came to emotional tracking it was evident that those spending longer times at the retreat increased in well-being. What is particularly fascinating about this study is the fact that researchers went beyond their time confinement to follow up with participants and determine the effects that came about as a result of diminished meditation. Three months of intensive meditation sustained positive reinforcement for only five months after the meditation sessions ceased.⁵⁰

Regardless of research findings, positive or negative the realization that meditation provides calmness and a better perspective is evident by many, CEOs from Twitter, Google, and Wisdom 2.0 are each incorporating meditation into their policies, providing daily sessions to increase calmness and creativity. Karen May, a vice-president at Google, concurred when she stated, ““We find that people often take interest in our mindfulness programs because they not only want to be able to develop the skills to focus and pay attention to the task at hand, but they also want to learn how to clear their minds so they can be more innovative and creative thinkers.”” Ms. May also believes, “mindfulness is a powerful tool to develop a stronger capability to handle ambiguity and complexity, and while mindfulness is one way to increase self-awareness and reduce reactivity, it is not the only way.”⁵¹ Inner balance is restored while

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Leah Lamb, “How Google And Twitter Train Their Employees To Be More Mindful,” *Fast Company*, January 28, 2016, accessed October 1, 2017, <https://www.fastcompany.com>.

being in the present. Being in the now, present awareness, eases the path toward compassion and kindness.

Corporate America has seen the benefits in listening skills and being present, being able to find comfort in the chaos of today's speed, which when handled on a daily basis produces healthier employees. "According to Soren Gordhamer, founder of Wisdom 2.0 "there is a longing for a more spacious, quality existence, both inside and outside of work. The next-generation...and employee is looking for quality of life.'"⁵² A quality of life that is obtainable with the concept of neuroplasticity reconfiguring the brain.

Each research finding has provided perspective on meditation outcomes. The range has been from no change to transforming results. Some have realized the added benefits to meditation. It is evident that the finer adjustment made in research the better the results. Neuroplasticity has demonstrated that repeated behavior changes old habits, creating new changes and in cases reversing the old.

In finding the parts of the brain that are triggered, we can focus and create revolutionary changes for daily life, and science. Corporate America is embracing the concept based on the productivity they see with their employees in and out of the workforce; by increasing endurance that aids in stress, reduction, health and overall well-being.

Other researchers are strictly interested in the biological function of the mind and the heart. This is critical since many can tell you their stories and the life changes meditation have made in their lives, but until it is a proven fact, not all will hop on board. In my opinion, the ideal situation for a meditative study addressed earlier with 38 participants during three months could expand its research taking advantage of the emergence process. A control group of this caliber could be monitored 24/7 and gain insight into other critical findings as to peaks and valleys

⁵² Ibid.

within time of day, before and after meals, before and after meditation and personal time, sleep patterns, and thoughts to name a few.

The scientific trend has been to use meditation to remedy stress and related conditions. However, the true and vast potential of meditation has been overlooked in most cases. I repeat, Dr. Josipovic is on the right track in searching for the inner unity to live a more fulfilled, compassionate life externally.

Preksha Meditation, while only 2 decades in age, derived from the Jain and Buddhist tradition; it has been perfected to coincide with roots from Jainism practiced in or around 400 BCE.⁵³

Preksha Meditation has not gained notice in the United States and as a result there are few practitioners. Preksha Meditation with its focus on breathing, gratitude, and relaxation relaxes the muscles to reduce stress and pain. With focus on breathing and expressing gratitude one can realize God's presence within and appreciate the divine gift of not having to do anything to breathe. Breathing under normal circumstances is effortless. When we breathe, focusing on what we are doing, totally conscious in our present activity we start to relax as we are eternally grateful for this automatic act we are blessed with to keep us alive.

In the following chapter, I will discuss in detail a research on Preksha Meditation conducted in Ladnun, India, with 40 young adults 25-30 years old during a 90-day period. The premise of the research was to reduce sugar in the blood due to the high rate of diabetes. At the end of the 90-day trial those in the experimental group showed reduced blood levels after daily sessions of Preksha Meditation.⁵⁴

⁵³ "Jain Meditation," Wikipedia, accessed January 8, 2017, <https://www.en.m.wikipedia.org>.

⁵⁴ Shekhawat, et al.,102.

The research that will be lifted up and explained further is to see if Preksha Meditation is calming and internalizing to the point of bringing each participant closer to God, through the pure emotions in being with self. In going inside, and spending time with self, the inward reach to a better self, there one rekindles or draws closer to the creator. It is my hope that in going inside, the valuable moments are used to be with self and God, adjusting ones inner self to flow with the spirit of the creator, strengthening the relationship, encouraging further visits, creating a cyclical relationship and giving rise to frequent visits to solidify the union between self and the creator. Built into the nature of the meditation is the ability to reduce pain and decrease disease in many cases after one session. At some point we reach a place where we are secure in our thoughts, we are content to be with self; attuning with nature and going with the flow of life. As to meditation, to quote Yogi Bhajan, “It brings mental caliber for purposes and prosperity of life.”⁵⁵

This is a lasting fulfilment after meditation, to receive the here and now, the present, raising the elevation of awareness. Of course, if one practices Preksha Meditation on a daily basis the results will increase and long term diseases may diminish further and/or disappear. These changes occur biologically in the brain, in the heart and are viewed by all outwardly when they experience our compassionate side and increased ability to be more mindful. This outward expression of love and compassion portrayed with each conversation draws others to follow in spiritual renewal.

⁵⁵ Khalsa, Prefix.

Chapter Three

Knowledge can be conveyed, but not wisdom...but it cannot be expressed in words and taught.

-Hermann Hesse (Siddhartha)

Preksha Meditation

I was introduced to Preksha Meditation while learning yoga at the Jain Institute in India. Preksha Meditation is a way of imparting knowledge, to deepen concentration. The word, “Preksha” means to “perceive carefully and profoundly.”⁵⁶ In perceiving carefully and profoundly, one must be in the present and be aware of the meditation while it is being conducted. As with all meditations it is imperative to be in the moment for full and lasting effects.

Preksha Meditation was developed from an ancient tradition to serve as an answer to the tension and chaos of life today. Preksha Meditation, in the form we know today and in the manner in which it is used for this research project, came to light during the celebration of Veer Nirvana Shatabdi. Before the celebration a group had been designated to trace the lineage of Preksha Meditation. Jains had forgotten about the meditation that had been part of their tradition and it was no longer practiced. With the investigation completed in 1974, Preksha Dhyana was reinstated into the doctrine and officially named Preksha Meditation. This revitalization gave Preksha Meditation a rebirth that has led to the maintenance of a long standing tradition, with a new name and a proven heritage.

Today five different relaxation techniques have been fully developed. According to Acharya Mahapragya to develop these techniques help was taken from the age old philosophies of Hattayoga, Tantra, Shaivasadhana, Vigyan Bhairava and other such scriptures, He believes that we did not become reserved orthodox we not only used ancient literature but also modern body science and anatomy and human psychology thus giving it a... new garb.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ J.P.N. Mishra, and P.S. Sekhawat, *Preksha Meditation and Human Health* (Ladnun, India: Jain Vishva Bharati University, n.d.), 50.

⁵⁷ Vidya Jain, “Preksha Dhyana:What is Preksha?,” *Jain World: Jainism Global Resource Center*, accessed April 19, 2017, <http://www.jainworld.com>.

When incorporated into a daily routine, tension will melt and there will be a clear path, moving one closer to God and better health. It is a change in mindset (“attitude adjustment”) and a benefit to all who choose this path. In the introduction of the Preksha Dhyana it states, “Preksha Meditation not just for achieving physical, mental and emotional well-being but a key to spiritual trove.

“Today, eminent doctors, specialist, and general practitioners have agreed that meditation is a powerful complementary therapy. Meditation can help us in healing and sustenance of good health. It can cure and protect us from several psychosomatic disorders that result from mental stress and tensions.”⁵⁸ The power of uniting specialist has led to the strength and momentum behind meditation and more people seeking to try it as an alternative modality.

“It was through the untiring work of Anuvrat Anushasata Shri Tulsi and Acharya Mahapragya this seemingly new technique that can ease mankind of its endless list of diseases and tensions came to its present state of a mission, a science, a way of life.”⁵⁹ The speed in which we communicate, travel and live life, far exceeds the slow pace of yesterday. Today, very few people are stress free. It is the daily stress that deprives us of life, depletes our existence, and steals our enthusiasm.

The Jain tradition is guided by the teachings of the spiritual leader; Tirthankara. A Tirthankara is a unique priest who has set a path for the cycle of death and rebirth and ultimately moksha, the liberation of the soul. The gateway to the path is open for others to follow and reach moksha. The most revered Tirthankara was the last one, Lord Mahavir, (Vardhamāna) who lived between 599-527 B.C.E. When asked, “How old is the Preksha word? It definitely is as old as

⁵⁸ Preksha Meditation, “Preksha Meditation: Introduction,” accessed February 19, 2017, <http://www.preksha.com/meditation>.

⁵⁹ Vidya Jain, “Preksha Dhyana: What is Preksha?” Jain World, *Jainism Global Resource*, accessed April 19, 2017, <http://www.jainworld.com>.

Mahavir, but if we go further in history... it dates back to the times of Rishabdeva (the first Tirthankar). Rishabdeva Bhagwan is the first person who talked about the theory of the soul.”⁶⁰

Some believe that Rishabdeva is the same person as Shiva, one of the principal deities in the Hindu tradition who is greatly revered. Shiva is the creator and destroyer of the universe.

In the Jain tradition, meditation is the primary form of expressing and reaching spirituality. Meditation is a form of learning to be in the present and reaching salvation, (मोक्ष/moksha). Moksha as an everyday Sanskrit term can mean peace or enlightenment, however in reference to Preksha Meditation it means to be free from the cycle of life, thus eternal salvation. Due to the union Preksha Meditation is also a technique to develop calmness, gain wisdom, and eventually enlightenment. In the pure state (unmodified) one can be said to be in a state of pure consciousness and reaching ones true self, (आत्मन्/atman). The atman is the eternal, inner soul, the true self. It is through this technique that one perfects the main rule of the Jain faith, to do no harm, (अहिंसा/ ahimsa). The concept of ahimsa, do no harm, started as a religious belief and has become part of the cultural norm.

Within the Jain religion, members are categorized as monks and householders. Householders are “laity,” everyone who is not connected to the religion as ascetics/monastic or living in commune in practice to become a monk or a nun); those who have chosen to remain in a household, living a family life. For householders the act of meditation is so important that it should be done three times per day, but at the very least once daily. The fact that householders are partaking ensures that Preksha Meditation is for everyone and can be practiced by all. Jains believe that each of the Tirthankara practiced meditation, which was the vehicle to enlightenment. This is one of the reasons why most of the images of the Tirthankara are depicted

⁶⁰ Ibid.

in a meditative state. By practicing Samayika (meditation-the first Jain duty) one (जीव/jiva) is transformed to the point of perfection. Jiva, in everyday vernacular means to breathe, to be alive, but for meditative purposes it is more profound and means the immortal soul, the soul that survives death.

Officially, Samayika (a vowed meditation) was not to exceed 48 minutes in a standing position. The revised meditation may be conducted in a sitting, standing, or a lying position. The time constraints remain the same. One starts by bowing facing north or to the east. It is interesting to note the correlation of Islamic tradition, which, when praying, practitioners face north-east toward Mecca. For those that are not householders and have achieved a higher level, they should be in a constant, continuous stage of Samayika. “Preksha Meditation is the practice of purifying the emotions and conscious (chitta) and realizing the own self. It helps in leading a peaceful life and is a system of meditation for attitudinal change, behavioral modification and integrated development of personality.”⁶¹

The author of *Preksha Meditation & Human Health*, Professor J.P.N. Mishra has a clinic in Ladnun, India, where Preksha Meditation is offered as one of the key components (treatments) to cure physical ailments, such as high blood pressure, with resounding results. I was privileged to visit the clinic and spend time there during the summer of 2016. Unfortunately, I was not there while patients were present, but was privy to medical reports, charting the progression of two distinct groups. I was able to see the progression of illnesses diminish completely or curtailed by yoga and/or Preksha Meditation. Vital signs throughout two or three months illuminated the changes made.⁶²

⁶¹ Acharya Mahapragya, *Preksha Dhyana: Theory and Practice*, Quoted from “00.01 introduction,” (Ladnun, India: Jain Vishva Bharati, 1994).

⁶² Pradyumna Singh Shekhawat, Yuvraj Singh Khangarot, and J.P.N. Mishra, “Influence of Preksha Meditation on Blood Profile of Adults,” 1, no. 2, 102. accessed October 1, 2017, <http://www.indianyoga.org>.

Three professors at the Jain Vishva Bharati University: Pradyumna Singh Shekhawat, Yuvraj Singh Khangarot, and Dr. J.P.N. Mishra conducted a 90-day research on forty young adults between the ages of 25-30 years old to determine if Preksha Meditation helped overall blood levels. The impetus for the following research was due to the increase in diabetes and to determine if Preksha Meditation can indeed be helpful to control sugar levels. The forty young adults were divided at random into two groups, 20 in an experimental group and 20 living their normal lives. At the beginning of the 90 days and at the end the following blood test were taken after fasting for 12 hours: Red Blood Corpuscles (RBC), which determines red blood count; Hemoglobin, (Hb), which determines levels of oxygen carrying protein to the organs; Erythrocyte Sedimentation Rate (ESR), which determines inflammation in the body; Glucose, which determines the sugar levels in the blood. At the end of the 90 days overall blood results were much better with the experimental group especially the glucose test.

Glucose test in and of itself does not determine diabetes, but is a substantial indicator. While there are many notable diseases, diabetes is on the rise and can spiral into complications quickly, leading to multiple diseases and culminating in retinopathy, (leading cause of blindness), amputation and death. “Preksha Meditation causes inhibitions of sympathetic nervous system and activism of parasympathetic nervous system, which ultimately decreases the metabolic rate. This may probably be the reason of lower blood glucose level.”⁶³ Preksha Meditation has been successful in curing diseases and enhancing overall well-being. However, nothing has been done in light of enhancing spirituality and rejuvenating the spiritual quest within a short period of time. According to Samani Dr. Mangal Prajna, the Vice Chancellor at the clinic in Ludnun, India, “Preksha Meditation is a simple but specialized technique of

⁶³ Shekhawat et al., “Influence of Preksha Meditation on Blood Profile of Adults,” 102.

meditation promoting positive attitudinal change and behavioural modification along with the development of integrated personality.”⁶⁴

An aspect of Preksha Meditation is to inhale and exhale deeply, to breathe (प्राणायाम/ prāṇayāma). In conducting prāṇayāma one is breathing, controlling the substance that provides life, controlling the life force. In meditation one is reminded to breathe in all that is good and exhale what is useless. This form of breathing is used to cleanse the breath and strengthen the energy flow.

Jainism has its roots in yoga, which is why there is a strong similarity between the five yamas, (नियम)-the observances to maintain a good standard within the Jain religion) found in yoga and the five vows of Jainism. Yoga is the foundation of Jainism. The five yamas (Jain vows) are the ethical guidelines that one is to live when practicing yoga/life:

- Ahimsa: do no harm,
- Satya: live and speak from the perspective of truthfulness,
- Asteya: “Thou shalt not steal,”
- Brahmacharya: to have courage and strength to maintain/control physical impulses
- Aparigraha: release from bondage, to be free from what we do not need.

One of the sacred Hindu books was compiled in 400 CE, The Yoga Sūtras of Patanjali, which came after the Rig Vedas, provides rules and regulations to practice life. Yoga was practiced by the Brahmins in an effort to live a harmonious life (the Eight Limbed Paths toward

⁶⁴ J.P.N. Mishra, and P.S. Sekhawat, *Preksha Meditation and Human Health*, (Ladnun, India: Jain Vishva Bharati University, n.d.), Forward.

enlightenment) following the eight limbs, of which meditation is one of them.⁶⁵ At the clinic in Ludnun, India, a study was conducted on healthy adults between 18-25 years of age for one year; the controlled group did asanas, breathing exercises, and Preksha Meditation. The experimental group did everything except Preksha Meditation. At different intervals each patient was tested and they showed normal blood pressure and heart rate. Shockingly, alpha brain waves were fewer with the Preksha Meditation group. Aside from other significant findings, the electrocardiography (ECG), and electroencephalography (EEG), were in a total state of “relaxed vigilance.” The best way to describe an ECG, sometimes called an EKG is the recording of the activity in the heart. An EEG is the amount of neurons discharged at a set interval of time. It has a direct lineage to cognitive and memory performance. According to the authors and clinicians of *Preksha Meditation and Human Health*, “Meditation may somehow accelerate neural conduction or augment the release of neurotransmitters, thereby decreasing synaptic time, resulting in a change in muscle firing threshold pattern. These findings appear consistent with the development of a heightened sensitivity of the human central nervous system and suggest a neural mechanism underlying the motor performance improvements of those who meditate.”⁶⁶

The clear evidence of research results in conjunction with my personal experience after one session allow me to state with confidence that Preksha Meditation can be transformational. Everyone is searching for a miracle drug. Here is a non-invasive technique that helps physically, mentally, and spiritually. God has blessed those currently on the planet with living longer, now we must learn to live healthier. Part of living healthier lies in maintaining a state of gratitude that will invigorate spirituality and draw one closer to the creator.

⁶⁵ Patanjali, *The Yoga Sutas of Patanjali: the book of the spiritual man*, trans. Charles Johnston (A Public Domain Book, 1912): 42, accessed November 23, 2015, <http://www.en.m.wikisource.org>.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 202.

When pastors are vibrant and serve with Godly love, everyone in their presence is revitalized and grows with the zeal of the Holy Spirit. In the words of pastor and author Gary L. Harbaugh, “a person is truly whole only in a relationship with God.”⁶⁷ Receiving the wellness cocooned in shalom can enhance and reveal an internal positive glow that shines in everyone. Shalom is normally used and best known as a salutation, a farewell word or simply as the Hebrew translation for peace. Shalom, as stated in the title and used throughout comes from Larry Kent Graham a professor of Pastoral Theology and Care at Iliff School of Theology. His definition of shalom unites the Hebrew word with the nurturing concept of wellness.

Health and holiness were therefore positively related and were united in the concepts of shalom and righteousness. Holiness refers to a sense of personal unity and integration of one’s being in dynamic relationship to God, world, and community out of choice... This existence is characterized by shalom, or bodily wholeness and being at peace with self, God, and neighbor... Thus, healing and salvation are linked insofar as they both involve restoration to dynamic wholeness in body, mind, spirit, society, and the world, and derive from being in proper relation to God.⁶⁸

In Preksha Meditation during Kayotsarga, (कायोत्सर्ग /the relaxation stage) the nervous system is recharged and moves the spiritual energy upward toward the head, the Jnana Kendra (Center of Knowledge) from the bottom of the spine, the Shakti Kendra (Center of Energy). Science has recently confirmed the function of neuroplasticity: reshaping the brain based on routine thoughts and behaviors. For years it was believed the brain ceased to grow at childhood, after that point brain cells were lost and never regained. With recent interest in neuroplasticity there is evidence from many sources that the brain expands and continues to grow in adaptability and capacity.⁶⁹ Currently the viewpoint has changed and now most believe the brain is forever changing and adapting to new thoughts and/or situations throughout its life; living in a constant

⁶⁷ Harbaugh, 17.

⁶⁸ Larry Kent Graham, “Healing,” *The Concise Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Glenn H. Asquith, Jr. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 232-3.

⁶⁹ Alane Daugherty, *From Mindfulness To Heartfulness* (Bloomington, IN: Balboa Press, 2014), Kindle, 880.

stage of transformation. Researched sources demonstrate cognitive activities improve the brain and increases adaptability. The most recent physical and mental actions create marks/crevons; when the thoughts/behaviors are continuous, they deepen, making it our “go to” place of comfort.

Neuroplasticity is the connection of neurons and how they bind constantly within our brain while we are alive. The brain is largely composed of grey and white matter. The white matter serves as a vehicle to ensure information travels from one place to the next. Grey matter is composed of neurons that process information. This is where the cells make the connections to expand knowledge/thought process.

Several scientists believe the brain can be retrained by new introductions. Dr. Donald Hebb a Canadian psychologist hypothesized in 1949 that when “two stimuli occur together, the near-simultaneous firing of cells results in a strengthening of their connectivity, so that they are more likely to fire together again.”⁷⁰ This makes the old and the new working in isolation weaker than the new paired stimuli.

However, if the thoughts are fleeting and the behavior sporadic; our neurons in times of decision revert to what is deepened in the brain. It reverts to the familiar, what it knows well. Thus, proving when one trains the mind, the brain can be altered. It manifest as part of our consciousness. Consciousness is the private experience conceived in the mind.

Even with today’s advanced studies and the progress made by the HeartMath Institute since 1991 in its attempts to help society learn about the connection between the mind and the heart; I revert to the original science of medicine, Ayurveda, where, for over 2,000 years, it is

⁷⁰ Victoria Pitts-Taylor, *The Brain’s Body: Neuroscience and Corporeal Politics* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 25.

believed that the soul is part of our consciousness. “According to Ramana Maharishi, the great Avatar master, ‘The godly atom of the Self is to be found in the right chamber of the heart, about one finger-widths distance from the body’s midline. ‘Here lies the Heart, the dynamic spiritual Heart...is located on the right side of the chest, and is clearly visible to the inner eye of an adept on the Spiritual Path.’”⁷¹ To some this means it resides with the consciousness and to others it is dormant within our hearts.

Dr. David Frawley, the author of many books and the modern day guru on Ayurveda states in his book, *Ayurvedic Healing*, “the soul, in the yogic system, is our inner consciousness.”⁷² In Ayurveda there is no distinction between the conscious and the subconscious mind, however, they are at times referred to as two separate entities. This is where meditation serves as a vehicle into the subconscious. This is our opportunity to relax the body and be reunited with each part of our internal organs and parts surrounded by our human skin, our body. We transcend the human to reach the subconscious where we reinforce the good and the relaxed state; generating calmness as our nature, gaining wisdom, and walking toward the path of enlightenment.

According to Michael S.A. Graciano, scientist, author, and professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Princeton University, we learn easier and faster when our learning experience is attached to an emotional situation because emotion enhances our imitation. Emotions with their inclusion of the senses are recognized as a perception in the amygdala, (part of the grey matter in the brain where emotions, survival and memory are triggered); where it joins with the cortex, (the folded grey matter in the brain primarily responsible for the consciousness language,

⁷¹ “What is Hridaya, the Spiritual Heart?” Hridaya Yoga, December 21, 2013, accessed March 31, 2017, Hridaya-yoga.com.

⁷² David Frawley, *Ayurvedic Healing: A Comprehensive Guide* (Twin Lakes, Wisconsin: Lotus Press, 2000), 56.

thought, and memory) to bring it to the hypothalamus, (the part of the brain that controls hormones, organs, and motivational behavior). As humans we exist in the physical and in the spiritual, both begin in our mind. We travel the brain's terrain, stopping at landscapes that assist in understanding untraveled concepts; these are the new things we experience.

This chapter started with the history of Preksha Meditation and how the brain perceived newness, meditation and how knowledge transforms us. This project seeks to explore if Preksha Meditation can help to revive the spiritual lives of pastors and increase their wellbeing while drawing them closer to God after one meditation session.

Preksha meditation has proven to be beneficial. However, not everyone wishes to take the time to meditate on words that are in Sanskrit and unable to be understood. The slight discomfort that is generated by reciting unfamiliar words subtract from the benefits and impact that could be generated from the meditation. To make the meditation palatable for the "human subjects" a few modifications were done. Some decisions were made before the process began and others after noticing resistance or discomfort. When that particular part of the meditation is reached the modification will be addressed to clearly determine the actual meditation and the changes that were made.

To begin the actual Preksha Meditation one must decide/commit to a position. The position could be standing, sitting, or lying down. The hand position (mudra) should be in Jnana Mudra, where the index finger and the thumb touch with a slight amount of pressure while the other three fingers remain straight out. The alternative mudra can be in the Brahma position with both palms facing up.

Once settled, instructions are given so that one perceives each part of the body as it is described/mentioned throughout the meditation. One must try to be free from sensations, but remain sensitive and aware of each bodily urge/sensation. Staying deeply concentrated, but remaining fully alert.

At the beginning of the meditation, the Arham, (invoking prayer) is recited. Due to the fact that many have been troubled by the Sanskrit and unable to follow its true meaning, much less understand it, I incorporated an English invocation, a prayer invoking God to guide the meditation and stay present throughout the session, bringing in healing.

To meditatively cleanse the body the following is done:

Concentrating on the naval, producing the sound “ahh” for two seconds.

Followed by:

concentrating on the heart center, making the sound “rha” for four seconds.

Finally:

Bringing all consciousness to the top of the head producing the sound, “mmm” for six seconds. This brings all consciousness to the top of the head.

This process is repeated nine times.

The sounds vibrate from the location of origin creating a combination of cleansing and preparing to begin the meditation.

This is ideal if one can “visualize that the sound waves are crisscrossing and weaving an oval shaped web of amour all around, protecting yourself from the evil effects of the eternal vibrations.”⁷³

It is important to see yourself through yourself.

⁷³ Acharya Mahaprajna, “A Handbook Of Preksha Meditation For Trainers,” trans. Muni Mahendra Kumar, Tulsi Adhyatma Nidam (Ladnun, Rajasthan: Jain Vishva Bharati, 1994), 2.

After a few cleansing breathe, one is to repeat aloud:

“I am practicing Preksha Meditation for the purification of my mind” three times.

This allows one to set intentions verbally, making your intentions known to the universe.

One must focus on relaxation, free of any tension, feeling completely limp.

One should feel completely relaxed, remaining perfectly still. This part of the meditation is called, Kayotsarga. Kayotsarga provides complete relaxation by concentrating on each part of the body, one by one, feet to head, starting with your right hallux, (big toe). After traveling up the right leg and then the left, part by part, one moves to relaxing the center of the body from the hips up to the neck, core, internal organs, front of the body, back of the body, addressing each part, slowly, deliberately. This process is fulfilled with constant reminders to breathe in love, light, something positive, while exhaling illness, negativity, everything that is unserving. This reminder to breathe in positive energy, while releasing negativity ensures the flow of normal breathing while ensuring the concentration on what is being done.

Once the neck is reached, the extremities of the arms have their turn, starting with the right thumb and slowly relaxing, the entire right arm and the entire left arm.

At the throat, it is imperative to relax all the muscles from the throat to the top of the head. Smaller muscles at times are a bit difficult to relax, thus this later part can take more time.

One must allow the mind to do a complete body scan to ensure complete relaxation. The scan tour starts at the head and works down to your toes and then repeated in the opposite direction; work going up to the head, ensuring complete relaxation. One must remember to remain still throughout the meditation. Focusing on vocal cords, ensure inner silence. Relax the throat and vocal cords. Remain in silence for five minutes. Now, in a state of complete relaxation, focus on the tip of the spinal cord, this is where the Center of Energy resides. At this

point it is vital to move the mind up the spinal cord to the head, the Center of Knowledge. Then allow the energy to flow back down to the Center of Energy. This process is repeated concentrating on the spinal cord, in, out, and around. Breathe with the flow of the visualization. For example, inhale on the trip up and exhale on the downward visualization. “Allow the mind to rise and fall inside the spinal cord.”⁷⁴

Breathe deeply, smoothly, slowly, and rhythmically, breathe in and out. Breathe using your diaphragm; expanding your abdominal muscles during each inhale. Continue to breathe rhythmically focusing on your abdomen. Now moving from the naval area to the nostrils; feel and visualize what you are experiencing/feeling with each breathe. Holding the breath allows one to regroup and focus in and out. Focus completely on your breathing. If distracted by anything, hold the breath. At this juncture one has the option to breathe deeply or do Alternate Nostril Breathing.

If there are any ailments, pain, discomfort, or disease, now is the time to hold that area physically with hands or mentally with the heart. Visualize the area, organ, hold that part of the body and send it love. Say a prayer for healing and/or ease of discomfort. Concentrate. Breathe deeply into the area and exhale the disease/discomfort. Concentrate on breathing. I suggested that each person take this opportunity, these few minutes to focus on that area. It is important to visualize the area/organ or hold it, send it love, show it love and appreciate it. At this juncture it is healing to say a prayer for a cure. Concentrate on the disease/discomfort, breathe into the area, and exhale the disease/discomfort. Concentrate on breathing in goodness, light, health, and God.

Gently transition your focus to the third eye.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

*Focusing at the third eye, the Center of Enlightenment let the radiance of the pure white light enter through the body. Perceive a white light. Once the white light is radiating, imagine it expanding throughout the forehead. Visualize the pure white light entering and leaving through an open space in the forehead. Experience calmness, remain in a peaceful state. At this point the meditation is complete. End the meditation with deep long breathe.*⁷⁵

It is normally suggested that the Aphorisms of Wisdom be recited. As a researcher I made the decision to omit the Aphorisms of Wisdom because it appeared to be a hindrance the first few times and displaced the goodness of the meditation leaving the ending shallow and not concluding on a high note. In anticipation of a strong percentage of Christians as human subjects, the Lord's Prayer was substituted. This decision proved fruitful with the exception of one person who was not a Christian and was unaware of the Lord's Prayer.

The final step of Preksha Meditation is the "perception of psychic colors."

It is a form of focusing on the chakras and their colors. It is not suggested for first time users and was eliminated as well. However, throughout the process it is not unusual to see colors (aura). Aura, the perception of psychic colors, is usually connected to emotions and the attitudes experienced at the moment and thus are ever changing. At times the colors of the aura are aligned with our chakras. We can change the color of our aura with deep visualization and concentration. For the purposes of Preksha Meditation it is suggested one begins with focus on the heart chakra, the center of bliss and the color green. Once the green permeates from the heart, the next step is to visualize the color all around you. If the color is diminished or goes away completely, one should try again. Throughout the process breathe in the green light and

⁷⁵ Ibid.

*repeat: “My emotional pattern is being purified; my mind is being purged of all the negative attitudes.”*⁷⁶

*Next, breathe in and focus on the color blue which correlates with the throat chakra, the center of purity. With full concentration, focus and breathe while repeating: “My sexual impulses are being under conscious control.”*⁷⁷

*Next, focus on the third eye, slightly above and between the eyebrows; the center of intuition, breathe in a bright red color. Inhale bright red, breathe it in. Visualize the bright red surrounding you from the third eye and with conviction realize: “My intuition power is developing.”*⁷⁸

*The following step is to visualize a bright yellow light. Concentrating on the center of knowledge, the top of the head, breathe in the bright, beautiful glow of yellow. “Now using auto-suggestion realise—‘My perceptive captivity is increasing.’”*⁷⁹

*The final step is to surround yourself and see yourself radiating with a glistening white light, like the light of the moon radiating from your center of enlightenment. As you continue to breathe in and out, surrounding your body with beautiful moonlight white entering through the middle of your forehead, mentally say, “My anger is waning away. My passions and emotions are being pacified. I am feeling complete tranquility of mind.”*⁸⁰ *This concludes the aura part of the Preksha Meditation. I repeat this is to be added once you are proficient with the meditation. This part expedites your natural color aura, and balances your chakras.*

In the next chapter the results of the actual sessions with the human subjects will be discussed; as well as interesting findings and anecdotes.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Chapter Four

Yes, as everyone knows, meditation and water are wedded forever.

-Herman Melville, Moby Dick

Research Findings and Interpretations

Research is as reliable as the information obtained in the process and the ability to interpret it accurately, without bias. The interpretation of the answered questionnaire will bring the facts from the responses to light. All will be able to understand and view how the “human subjects” in this research project experienced Preksha Meditation. Personally, the value of this research filled my heart and went beyond expectations. After group sessions, the desire to learn more and want more was real; human subjects individually had a desire to share their stories. It was profound.

Since the nature of this research is pertinent to meditation and pastors; groups were formed from both disciplines to determine short, succinct questions that would provide a view into the hearts of each human subject/participant after a meditation session. The first draft of questions was composed by a group of three yoga instructors who conduct daily meditation sessions and I; together we determined how to streamline the questions needed. The goal was to ask questions that reveal if the meditation session drew the participants closer to God and if they truly felt physically, mentally, and spiritually healthier after the session. Once the questions were created, they were reviewed and revised for the integrity of the meditation and clarity of the questions. The second group to provide input were pastors. This group convened to discuss how they would feel in answering the questions. They felt comfortable answering each question and felt they could answer clearly and precise and elaboration if necessary. The third group was a prayer group who took the test for timing and to ensure clarity. The group had a lengthy and rich discussion as to the ease of interpreting each question for a common understanding. The final group composed of the original four yoga instructors (including myself) reviewed all drafts and

determined by notes taken in the final draft, after combining input from everyone, provided the clarity, transparency, and openness to generate heartfelt, direct answers. The group concluded with a resounding, “yes.” The final results were 12 short questions and a personal component to determine: sex, age, title, years of service, state of residence, and an open space to provide comments.

To obtain human subjects for the actual meditation, flyers were designed and placed throughout the Claremont School of Theology campus and shared on Facebook. Personal friends were invited to assist in the process. These solicitations generated 16 human subjects. Each human subject was given the option to choose a location for the session between their office/home, my home, or a neutral place on or near the campus. Those with an office, (8) chose the office, while everyone else chose between my home, (3) or a location on campus, (5).

During the first three sessions, there were questions about the opening (*The Aphorism of the Aim*) and closing (*The Aphorism of Wisdom/The Aphorism of Taking Refuge/The Aphorism of Faith*) Sanskrit prayer. This led me to reevaluate the Meditation and what was actually said. I chose to use the translated version of the beginning prayer. The actual translation was provided when the meditation was originally given to me. After careful analysis of the verbiage and uncommon terminology used in the closing prayers, it was clear that they were more of a hindrance than a help. In taking the meaning and the message they portray, I found a replacement that would give equal reverence as did the original. In anticipation of a Christian audience and due to the fact that the words from all *The Aphorisms* are lessons on how to live, I decided to implement *The Lord's Prayer*. These two changes, the beginning and ending prayer, proved to be beneficial, especially closing with *The Lord's Prayer*; it provided a seal to the meditation that

was embraced by the familiar words of spirituality. The Lord's Prayer worked for each human subject with the exception of one who was unfamiliar with the prayer due to his denomination.

Those familiar with meditation were expecting an "Americanized" version of meditation with soft music and aromatherapy providing fragrance to create the ambiance. It never occurred to me to provide either one, although I have provided both during yoga sessions. After the first three, I made it an option and participants were allowed to set the stage as to music/silence, aromatherapy/fragrance free, and as to the position for their duration of the session.

Out of the first 13 sessions, 10 were one-on-one and three were with two subjects at the same time. Those in a one-on-one session had more questions at the end of the session and had a genuine curiosity about Preksha Meditation, requesting additional information. The observation made with groups of two was the same as above for the group with two females, but not the same for the two sets of male counterparts. Male sets limited their questions and interaction after the session.

The next two sessions were conducted during an international conference in Chicago, DIAKONIA. During each session there were seven participants at each meditation session for a total of 14 subjects. During the sessions all were invited to meditate, but only clergy were invited to participate in the study. This group, however small, added an international component since six participants were from other countries representing: Australia, Canada, England, and New Zealand. If we are to take this compact sample as evidence, then it provides credence that this is not just a problem inherent in the United States, but clearly evident in different parts of the world. Of noteworthy mention is the fact that a large group of African deaconess' found the

meditation to be a great benefit, but were unfortunately unable to participate due to their laity status.

The third group took place in Salisbury, England, consisting of clergy and laity from around the United States convening for a Wesleyan Pilgrimage. This group consisted of fifteen participants. Unfortunately, this group was not allocated the full 48 minutes required for the meditation; the session was shortened by eight minutes to allow for a break in-between sessions.

The final group consisted of a session with four participants: two clergy, a bishop, and a priest; and two one-on-one sessions at Chautauqua Institute in Upstate New York. Chautauqua is an institution providing a unique nine week summer session offering, art, religion and lecturers. These situations describe the settings for all 51 subjects.

The compositions of the subjects were 22 males and 29 females. The participants, as previously stated, represented 5 countries and 19 states within the United States. Fifty-four percent were clergy, 36 percent were Deacons and 10 percent were leaders of different denominations with titles such as: Rabbi, Priest, Cantor, and Minister. There was a lay leader/minister who was allowed to participate because of responsibilities for a church for over three years. During that time she has worked in the capacity of a local pastor. Years of service within the participants ranged from 1 to 60 years of service. The denominations that participated were from: Anglican/Church of England, Baptist, Disciples of Christ, Judaism, Lutheran, Presbyterian and the United Methodist Church. Representation from the United Methodist Church was 50 percent, with 25 participants.

Forty-three subjects were not new to meditation. In fact, 22 subjects identified as meditating from daily to several times per week. Twenty-one subjects ranged from having

participated in a meditation session, to rarely/infrequently, to one other time. Ten out of 51 participants found the meditation experience “somewhat” difficult or had problems initially, three stated, “not at first.” It is not uncommon to experience difficulty concentrating when one is new to meditation. Regardless of the difficulty to commit to the experience unanimously all subjects found the experience relaxing, and if they had pain it was removed and a feeling of well-being and peace consumed them. To this note, two similar questions were asked:

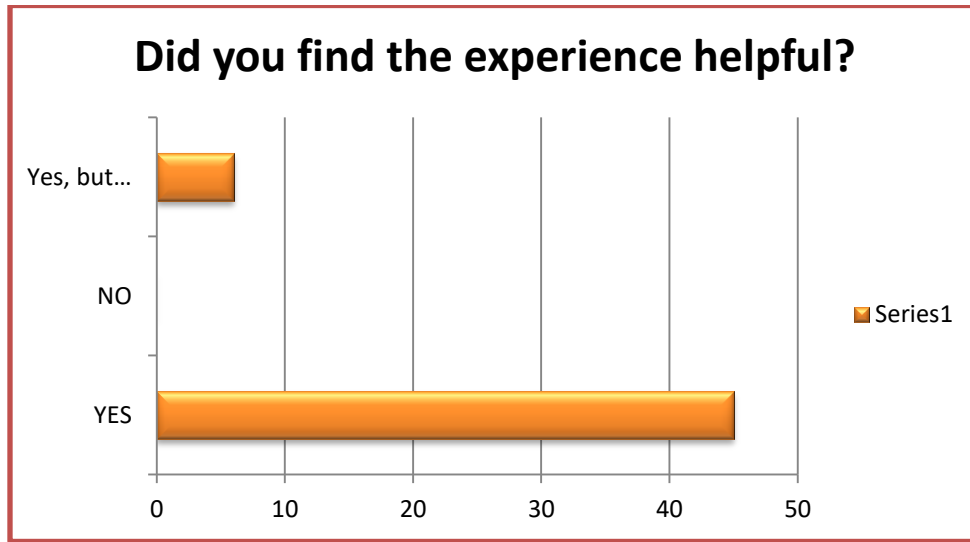
1. Was it beneficial?
2. Did you find the experience helpful?

Unanimously each participant found the experience to be beneficial. While the questions are alike they elicited a different response. The response for the second question was 45 yes, zero no’s, and 6 replied, “yes but;” the few that responded, “Yes, but,” made the following comments:

- no more or less than any other time
- as far as feeling relaxed
- almost, I should have laid down
- somewhat
- helpful to tune in and rest with God in a new way
- I will have to consider this in the coming days

The comments above were interpreted to be between neutral and positive, but not of a negative nature.

Table 3.1 Question 3 of the Questionnaire Survey



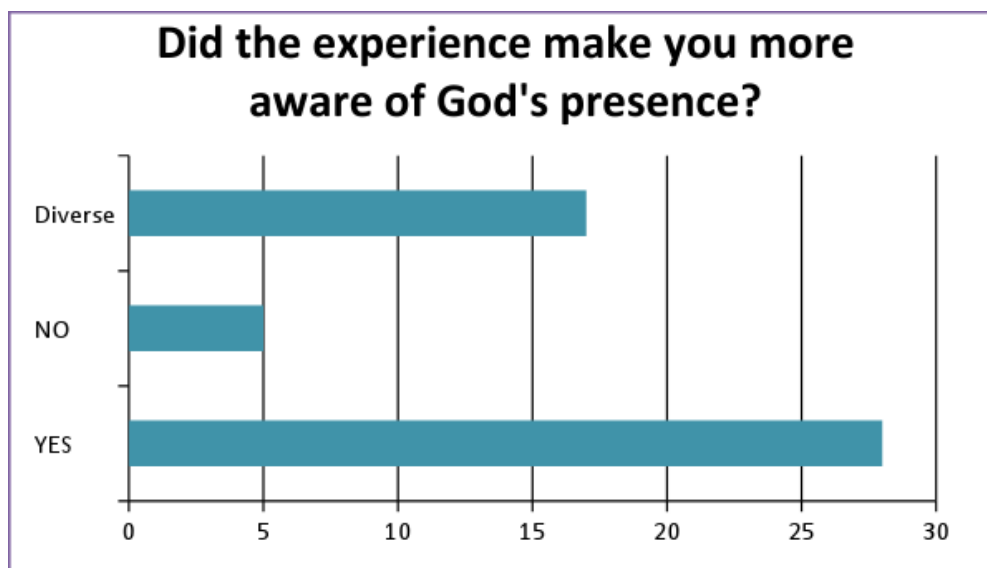
The interesting point at this interval is that although “new” to meditation, 17 out of 21 participants found the experience helpful, 13 out of the 21. Whether the participant was a novice or well-seasoned to the world of meditation, the greater part of the subjects, 45 subjects found the experience to be helpful as indicated by Table 3.1 above.

The table below (Table 3.2) is a representation of responses to Question 4: “Did the experience make you more aware of God’s presence?” This question goes to the very core of the thesis statement: Does Preksha Meditation draw you closer to God? Slightly above half, 28 participants answered “yes,” while five answered in the negative and 17 were “undecided.” A few of those stating undecided made the following comments:

- not anymore than usual
- not sure if more, but in a different way
- a bit
- sort of
- I don’t know yet, I need to practice it more

As stated above, these answers leave room for contemplation over time to solidify a future answer. There is also the skepticism of the conscious mind, “How can a meditation bring one to God?” Contrary, in one case, a subject responded, “not this time, it has in the past; I think I needed to relax today,” joyfully admitted to feeling physically healthier because the pain in a toe was gone, in addition to a tickle in the throat.

Table 3.2 Question 4 of the Questionnaire Survey

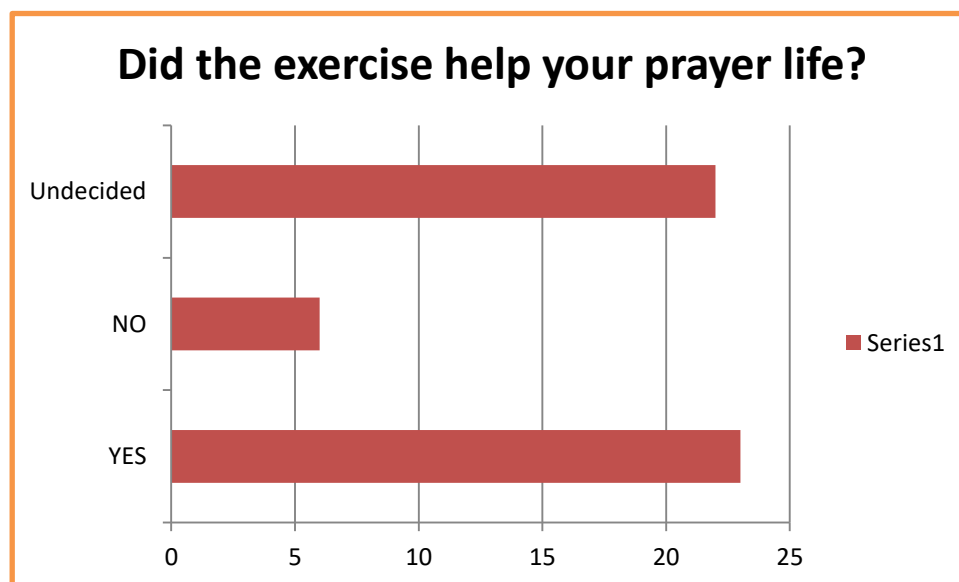


Closely related to Question 4 is Question 5: “Did the exercise help your prayer life?” Almost half, 23, answered in the positive and six, in the negative. Twenty-one, had diverse answers, although none were leaning toward the negative. Most answers were around the individual’s routine. For example, there was a subject that agreed the tranquility of “quiet time” allowed him to pray, but he was uncomfortable in silence. There was another who could see Preksha Meditation assisting with prayer life in the future, if practice would be incorporated and continued. Another graciously shared how the meditation experience became an extension of their prayer. Most that fell in the realm of “undecided” were primarily because of the issue of

time. While they were not excluding the goodness of the experience, they didn't want to affirm with only one experience and indicated the need of time to answer the question with certainty. The fact that most are willing to continue says some benefit was found that invites them to repeat the act, rather than dismiss it or confirm its validity after a single session.

Most of those with years of experience confirmed that meditation overall helps their prayer life and is the reason why they continue to practice. One subject stated, "Yes. The exercise prepares a more intimate/spiritual offering to prayer." Another stated, "Yes, it complements and deepens my prayer life spoken or silent. Preksha Meditation will be added to my inner life." Yet another stated, "Yes, feeling of well-being." The results are indicated by Table 3.3. below.

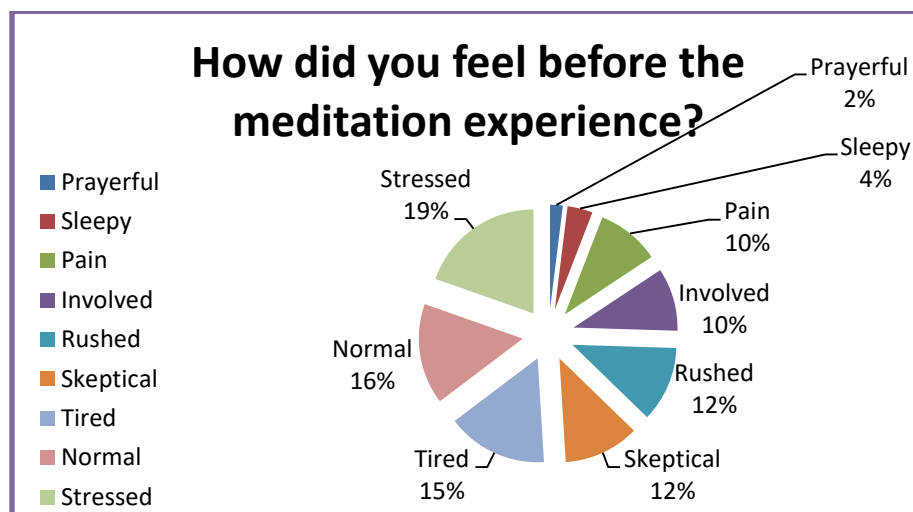
Table 3.3 Question 5 on the Questionnaire Survey



Questions 6 and 7 are joined together to gain an insight as to the subjects state of mind before and after the meditation. Question 6 addresses the state before and Question 7 asks for their state after the meditation. As illustrated on the graph below, (Table 3.4 and Table 3.5) emotions were within a wide spectrum, however, after the meditation everyone was relaxed, some were aware, and a few in a prayerful state. In response to Question 7, one subject wrote, “Peaceful. Grace-filled. Blessed. Embraced by Divine love and united with all of creation.” Another subject replied, “I feel at peace with God, laying my burdens at the feet of the cross. Less stressed and more in the present.” The five who were experiencing pain were free of pain and added it to their state of being, such as:

- relaxed and without pain
- truly relaxed, stomach feels good, refreshed
- spacious inside, diminishment of pain

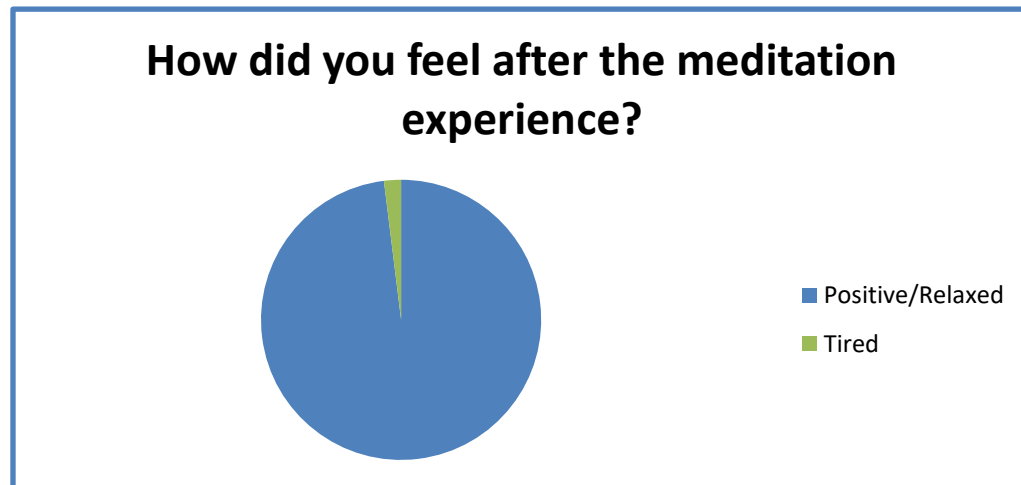
Table 3.4 Question 6 of Questionnaire Survey



A lay person who was in excruciating pain was pleasantly surprised with the results. He not only incorporated it into his repertoire, but was eager to share the meditation with his church

family. He was convinced the seniors in his church would benefit from the results of “feeling better, relaxed and more in love with God.”

Table 3.5 Question 7 of Questionnaire Survey



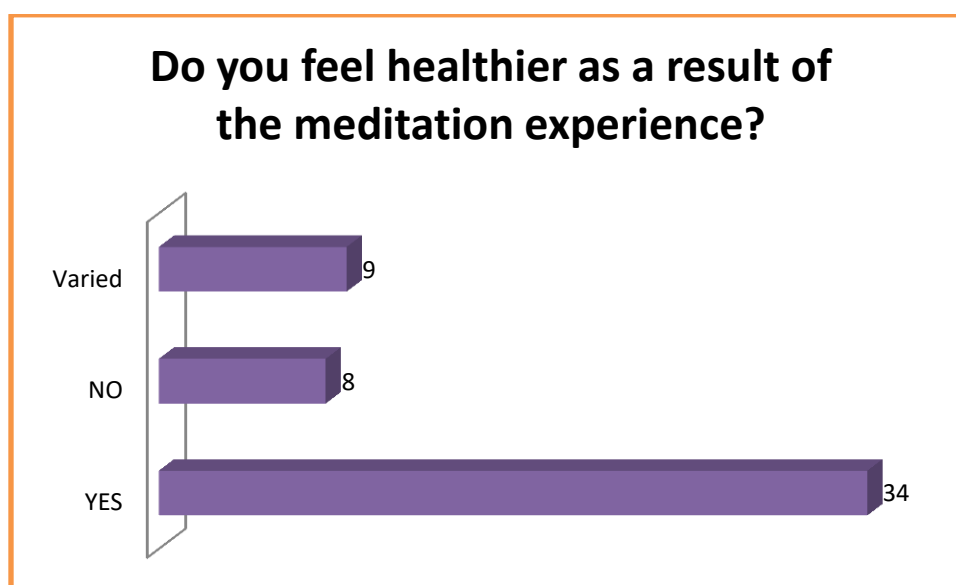
Question 8, “Do you feel healthier as a result of the meditation experience?” elicited 34 positive answers, eight participants responded in the negative and nine were uncommitted with answers such as:

- sort of
- somewhat
- maybe
- not sure
- hard to say
- I don’t know

The high number depicting a positive response is a clear indication that many indeed felt healthier, pains prior to meditation had ceased or lessened and/or they now felt a feeling of well-

being, thus leading to the affirmative answer. The chart below, Table 3.6 provides an illustration of the results to Question 8.

Table 3.6 Question 8 of Questionnaire Survey

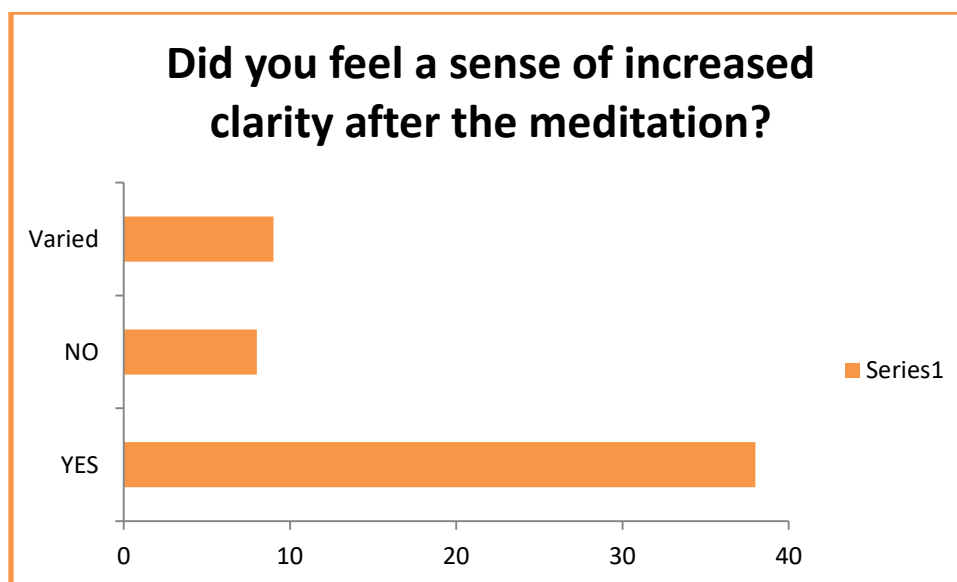


One participant stated that their Temporomandibular Disorder, (TMJ) had substantially subsided after the meditation. My TMJ completely vanished as a result of the meditation. I contacted the person two months later to inquire about the TMJ and the response was, “It is pretty much cured except for some stress days.” This is not an unusual occurrence.

Clarity is essential to move forward in life with a plan that is focused. Without clarity one is unable to move forward with conviction. Clarity is a decision that can only be arrived at by carefully analyzing the path, not merely the destination. When one is in the present, there is an awareness that speaks from the inner soul; that is clarity. Question 9 goes to the crux of that feeling, “Did you feel a sense of increased clarity after the meditation?” One of the facets of

well-being is calmness because the path is clear. What is down the road is recognized, acknowledged, and seen with clarity with the obtainable goal in mind. Question 9 elicited 40 positive responses, meaning clarity was obtained for 40 participants. Four participants were undecided and seven answered in the negative. The meditation helped 80 percent reach clarity. The graph below, Table 3.7 serves as a visual to see responses obtained at a glance.

Table 3.7 Question 9 of Questionnaire Survey



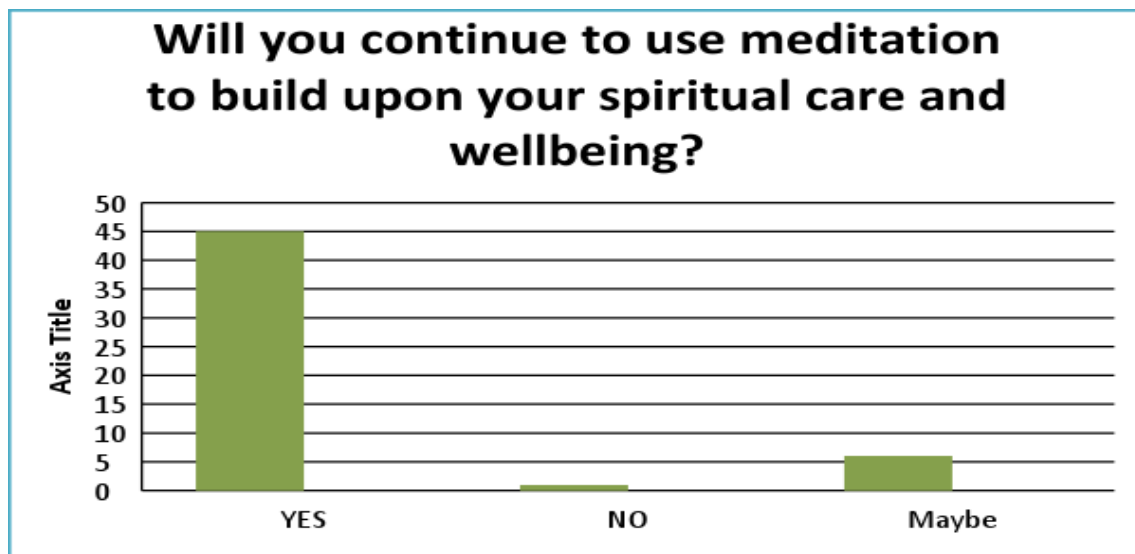
Question 10 provides the opportunity for participants to self-reflect and determine if the level of clarity obtained served to boost their ability to continue with their ministry. The question is asked in a simple and explicit manner, “Did the exercise serve as a “boost” to continue with your ministry?” This is one of the few questions where age correlated with the response. Younger pastors, those categorized as Millennials (40-years-old and younger) replied, “Yes” to this question. In total, 39 participants felt a boost from the meditation. One participant described the boost as: “I feel emptied of negative unnecessary, not serving God ‘stuff’.” Four participants

responded, “No” and one had the following comment: “I doubt it; my ministry is ‘action’ packed.” Eight were undecided; one comment within this category was: “Weekly practice could be sustaining. Not sure if one time can, but maybe.”

Question 11 is an open ended question where the responses can be compiled to assist in future research. The question is posed in this manner: “What could improve the experience?” Most responses were around issues of comfort: request for a daily meditation, running water/soft music, more time, smaller group, more quiet time afterwards, Bibliography of resources and some thinking it was “just right.” These responses will be addressed in the final chapter as recommendations.

The final question was intended to seek a soft commitment to continue meditating and to reinforce that the experience was such and worthy to continue in that vein. Question 12 is stated as follows: “Will you continue to use meditation to build upon your spiritual care and well-being?” The Millennials all answered in the affirmative; the younger were likely to incorporate the meditation into their repertoire. This statement is also true for those in service for ten years or less, regardless of age. It is important to state that three of the pastors in service for fewer than ten years were from Canada, England, and New Zealand. While a minuscule sample, it reflects 100 percent of those from other countries in ministry for under ten years. A total of 45 participants committed to meditate to increase their well-being. One was opposed and six answered maybe/undecided, of which half omitted an answer to the question. Table 3.9 below illustrates the responses to Question 12.

Table 3.8 Question 12 of Questionnaire Survey



At the end of the questionnaire, the opportunity to provide input was made available. Many responded, “Thank you!” in addition to lovely compliments which will also prove to be helpful and will be incorporated into future research. Some of the comments were as follows:

- Your voice is well suited for leading this
- Very well done. Facilitator’s disposition made a difference in being able to settle in and focus on the exercise.
- This experience has made me realize how much I need a special place, a prayer rug, the power of blocking out external distractions.
- Grateful for the meditation it helped me to stop, have a selah, to reflect, contemplate. The recognition and melting away of the body was interesting, following to push one through to sense world or relations around me differently, as well as myself.
- Well done-However too cerebral. Slower paced. Always a nice process.
- Thank you for your efforts. Best wishes on your journey. Very helpful. My father was completely healed thru yoga for his asthma problem.
- Giving thanks for a part of my body experiencing was revelatory, reminding me

of the Welcoming Prayer. The discomfort I was feeling evaporated. Additionally, I learned something for which I am more consciously grateful.

- Maybe explain the kind of meditation, (rationale for name, background music could be more generic-certain hymns mean something to me and I get distracted easily.
- I did not connect with the prayer focus; I entered into and enjoyed the silence. I may have missed something because I dozed off.
- The meditation leader was very calm and deliberate that helped. At some point you felt like you were floating. I guess that is good.

The comments above have been extremely helpful to determine changes that can be made; they have been carefully reviewed and integrated into the conclusion. The comments are reflective of the moment of sudden realization on many faces after the meditation and how they voiced their new revelation. In some instances one could see the amazement of how easily life can change, in others you can see a bewilderment of disbelief, “what just happened?” Overall there is plenty of gratitude and the revelation that taking time out to meditate is extremely helpful. These findings are, in part, due to the availability to recognize oneself on another level given the opportunity to look within and seek a clearer view of self. Many made the link between meditating and being closer to God. All who were suffering with pain felt better. Thus we ended the session in a state of shalom.

Conclusion

Don't try to use what you learn from Buddhism to be a better Buddhist; use it to be a better what-ever-you-already are.

-Dalai Lama

Exploring Preksha Meditation as a Path to Shalom For Pastors

Based on my observations and participants' self disclosure, over half of the participants received the spirit of shalom in their encounter after one session of Preksha Meditation. The results of the research are favorable. Regardless of being a novice meditator or an experienced yogi, each participant reported the introduction of Preksha Meditation to be a beneficial experience with positive outcomes. This is a path to secure feeling better, being healthier and to be right with God on the journey to spiritual vivaciousness.

Beneficial outcomes manifest in many ways regardless of how one feels at the onset. From the research findings I ascertained that slightly over half of the participants found benefit in being drawn closer to God and a connection between Preksha Meditation and their prayer life. Let me emphasize these results are from a one-time only encounter with Preksha Meditation. One simple meditation can offer a healing experience. I provide myself as evidence, as well as the five participants that were relieved of pain after one session of Preksha Meditation. One encounter can illuminate a healthier path. To heal spiritually, to nurture the soul, requires attention, a spirit of gratitude and a desire to live into the spiritual realm that reinforces the unity of the body, mind, and soul. Consciously knowing and believing that this path is a step in the journey that brings one closer to God. To quote Yogi Bhajan, "every inhalation you receive is a reflection of God's presence in you."⁸¹ It is in that seamless meshing of the body, mind and soul that we grow to see and feel beyond using our heart and our mind.

As discussed in Chapter 1, repeated sessions of Preksha Meditation can increase endurance and enhance the intentionality aspect of the meditation; in this case drawing one

⁸¹ Khalsa, 22.

closer to God, altering “our biology and emotional life”.⁸² Preksha Meditation can create an immediate change or it can make an ever so slight shift; unnoticeable. The shift can be so small, like a drop consistently falling on the same spot creating a groove unique to the contour.

The hypothesis as stated was to discover if Preksha Meditation provided participants with a healthier feeling, an increase in their well-being overall. If we define healthier as a relief from pain, the success rate is 100 percent. If we interpret feeling healthier, by the absence of pain, rested and feeling better than when the session started, 34 out of 51 participants identified feeling healthier, than before they started Preksha Meditation sessions. Meditation as a form of “religious involvement is associated with greater well-being and life satisfaction, greater purpose and meaning in life, greater hope and optimism, less anxiety and depression.”⁸³ Preksha Meditation, based on the findings, offers the same with the addition of spiritual closeness and the ability to heal certain illnesses.

The experience of Preksha Meditation took 40 participants into the path of shalom, which provided clarity that for most transformed into a boost, providing vitality that was absent prior to the meditation session. The findings tipped the scale demonstrating the advantageous nature of Preksha Meditation within each aspect of shalom: unity of body and mind, relationship with God, and the process of disease and healing.⁸⁴ Adding Preksha Meditation to an existing practice, and having a prayerful life can reinforce a shalom outcome.

⁸² Goleman, 235.

⁸³ Harold G. Koenig, David B. Larson and Susan S. Larson, “Religion and Coping with Serious Medical Illness: The Annals of Pharmacotherapy,” *General Medicine* 35 (March, 2001): accessed November 17, 2017, <https://www.theannals.com>.

⁸⁴ Graham, 233.

Hermann Melville writes in *Moby-Dick*, “Meditation and water are wedded forever.”⁸⁵ Meditation is essential to the spirit, as water is essential to the physical body. God’s ultimate commandment is to “...love the Lord, your God with all your heart...”⁸⁶ to love God, one must share time with Him, in meditation, like prayer. The spirit is free and enlivened by the relationship with God, while our bodies thrive on water to cleanse us internally and externally. When we deliberately care for our spirit (soul), we allow God to nurture us with the divine and our true self emerges.

Preksha Meditation healed me of a severe pain while I was traveling in India. I was not new to meditation; in fact, I would attribute my first meditation session to a haphazard event that took me on my life long journey into meditation. In 1984 when the Olympics were in Los Angeles, I was offered the opportunity to purchase an Olympic license plate. Given where I was in life, I decided on “BHAPY” (it had to be five or less characters); this became my daily reminder and mantra to be happy. Perhaps it was my introduction to meditation. Four years later Bobby McFerrin, (1988) came out with the hit song, “Don’t Worry Be Happy.” The catchy tune made it easier to recite. By this time in my life, I prayed every day and added the mantra to my repertoire. A few years later, I added saying, “Thank you God” for every blessing received, making myself aware of the goodness that was bestowed upon me. Awareness brings wholeness; the process is a journey and happiness has grown each day, with occasional, life learning setbacks. In the last eleven years I have added, subtracted, and modified many meditations to suit my needs. Preksha Meditation as in this research project relieved my pain. I have not stopped with this meditation, but periodically add a new one for the sake of variety, but always return to

⁸⁵ Hermann Melville, *Moby-Dick* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1851), <http://mel.hofstra.edu/moby-dick-the-whale-proofs.html>.

⁸⁶ Luke 10:27

its healing mercies and the strength it has in solidifying my relationship with God. I share this story, just because of its simplicity. It takes a second to say, “BHAPY” and in that second, it puts a smile on my face and lifts my spirits, improving my attitude each time.

In the path of shalom a relationship with God is cultivated to gain clarity, an intrinsic wisdom displayed as mini revelations, which grow in frequency, allowing us to better know ourselves and strengthen all relationships with the creator and others. This process generates a clearer form of thinking and longer periods of happiness. This clarity sets one on the right path, (or keeps one there). It’s almost like being on “the road less traveled,” except it is ones path, the road, untraveled yet leading one down a path of new enlightenment. This journey cultivates a new inner strength of who you are, provides outer strength and lets others through their perception follow your path.⁸⁷ This is what others want to see in their pastors. In the latest edition of *CT Pastors*, Linda Perkins quotes Marshall Shelley to state, “Pastors need to know how to grow spiritually in their own lives, as well as how to lead others to do the same.”⁸⁸ Pastors are to lead by example.

A month after hurricane Maria hit the island of Puerto Rico, Luis Morales, Disaster Coordinator for the South Georgia Conference, appointed as United Methodist Committee on Relief’s (UMCOR), liaison to Puerto Rico, visited the island. Upon his return on October 27, 2017, we spoke. He informed me of the selfless acts he witnessed throughout Puerto Rico during

⁸⁷ Michael S. A. Graciano, *God Soul Mind Brain: A Neuroscientist’s Reflection on the Spirit World* (Teaticket, Massachusetts: Leapfrog Press, 2010),134.

⁸⁸ Marshall Shelley, “Evolving Ministry Needs,” ed. Linda Perkins, *C T Pastors*, (Fall 2017): 13. Quoted in Linda Perkins, “Pastoral Training Is Changing: It’s not a straight path to the pulpit anymore,” *Christianity Today*, February 2018, accessed March 1, 2018. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/2018/february-web-exclusive/pastoral-training-is-changing.html>.

his stay and the altruistic acts of Bishop Hector Ortiz. When Morales arrived at the steps of the church with tarps and water and tried to give them to the Bishop, his response was, “give them to the people. I will not do anything for myself until my people are taken care of, if you give them to me, I’ll only turn around and give it to them.”⁸⁹

We look to pastors to give unselfishly, to be the “head and not the tail,”⁹⁰ and with the same grace place the needs of the flock before theirs. There are pastors who graciously give of self, that is who they are, while others must be reminded of their worth and learn to be confident and rest in the assurance that God will provide.

Pastors not only need help, but they are asking for help. Eighty-five percent of the participants in the research were not new to meditation and a quarter of them meditate on a regular basis. This says they seek a methodology beyond prayer to reach calmness and self reflect, at the very least. While there were those that found meditating challenging, all found it to be a beneficial experience to relax them, ease or remove pain, and provide a feeling of well-being; an aspect of shalom.

On July 29, 2016, Rev. Otis Moss, III, from the amphitheater of Chautauqua Institute, quoted the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: “The faith communities are not to be the taillights, but the headlights...not married to politicians, but to be a prophetic voice that is always turning people’s gaze toward: mercy, love and compassion.”⁹¹ For the community to gain respect for pastors, people must view them as the ones with a ‘prophetic voice,’ while the pastor must step into the shoes of the powerful position of caretakers of spiritual lives. As a nation, as a

⁸⁹ Luis Morales, (Disaster Coordinator for the South Georgia Conference, UMCOR liaison to Puerto Rico), a phone conversation with Rosa Linda Guadarrama, October, 27, 2017.

⁹⁰ Deuteronomy 28:13

⁹¹ Otis Moss, III., “The Other America,” Chautauqua Institute, Sermon, (Chautauqua, NY, July 29, 2016).

community the vicious cycle must be worked on simultaneously. As pastors grow in their faith, they will be in a position to help others, not by imparting knowledge, but through the wisdom of teaching others by example. A huge part of being in ministry is to be with God, sharing thoughts and carefully listening in prayer, when reading the Bible in a contemplative style. Part of being in ministry is to have the soulful time to be with God, sharing your thoughts, while listening to the sweet low whisper to guide you on the right path. This takes love for God and the commitment to want to embrace God and truly be of the mindset, “*Primero Dios*” (God willing). When we grow in faith we allow the unique internal flow to lead us in our universal oneness and our personal trinity: body, mind and soul.

A few theological schools have realized the gap between the pastors they are grooming and the needs of the community. Christian Theological Seminary (CTS) to name one has jointly ventured with the Lily Endowment to create a community immersion program for students to grow with community ties, reinforcing good habits and inducing self-care. While speaking to the Director of Recruitment at CTS, Monique Crain, she stated in the five years the program has been in existence it has exceeded expectations in the development of friendships, trust and interfaith relations. She also stated, “The goal is to create spaces of provocative thought and discernment, to carve out a vocational path that is transformational for the causes of Christ.”⁹²

CTS also offer the National Clergy Renewal Program that expands to those in ministry and the relationships that are created during the four years, both in and out of the classroom. My strongest recommendation is to have a similar program at Claremont School of Theology (CST) and enhance it with Preksha Meditation as a path to shalom. Integrating these methods at the student level will reinforce interfaith relations, provide internal support systems and illuminate

⁹² Monique Crain (Director of Recruitment at Christian Theological Seminary), a phone conversation with Rosa Linda Guadarrama, December 7, 2017.

the path to shalom. Shalom, internal peace, individual wellness and a closeness to God embracing in love and nourishing our personal trilogy of, body, mind, and soul.

By starting at theological schools, meditation practices can be conducted at a set determined time, this will help to make the process habitual. As I stated earlier in Chapter 2, by implementing a new process, new neurons are created. As stated in Dr. Josipovic's research, the hope is to find the point in which meditators reach the level of "oneness." After years of meditation at any point the brain can open the file and easily extract, what was once placed on file, to produce a state of calmness. As stated in footnote 49, the Saron Lab at UC Davis believes that after three months of meditation, the benefits can be recalled for up to five months. However, the hope is that the exercise is continued and practiced routinely for at least once a week forever, to keep the file current.

Finances are always an issue. In California, we share the state with one of the most financially secure industries, the movies. Building strong ties with foundations and corporate America is imperative to the growth and sustainability of such programs. It is important to secure a financially sound partnership that will allow for creativity expanding beyond students' educational experience and meet the needs of the interfaith community. In the words of Dr. Robert Franklin, professor at Candler School of Theology and author of *Crisis in the Village* states, "every school must become centers for both intellectual and character development."⁹³

It is my hope that CST, as well as other schools of theology would wish to participate in a similar program and seek to enhance the spirit of shalom by incorporating Preksha Meditation;

⁹³ Robert M. Franklin, *Crisis in the Village* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), Kindle, 2348.

allowing time with God and ultimately, His people. It is right to strive to be as healthy as possible, and to be “the salt of the earth”⁹⁴ to spread God’s word.

The next steps would be to develop a curriculum for students, alumni and the communities that wish to join in the partnership. Each comes to the table with a unique need and role to fill and should be configured individually first and secondly as a unit. Each aspect will address challenges pertinent to that community, provide the meditation in a consistently scheduled manner, and build friendships, support groups and a mentor component. In the words of Dave Ferguson from Community Christian Church in Chicago, “In an apprentice model, you educate through teachable moments...No one drowns in a good apprentice model.”⁹⁵

For the community at large, and with an altruistic heart, I wish to provide Preksha Meditation in the form of Spiritual Formation for retreat centers. My hope is that the momentum of its benefit exhilarates our religious communities and together from different aspects helps to change the mind and heart of most to create a more compassionate world. Embracing Preksha Meditation as a routine practice and utilizing it to develop problem solving skills as they occur will provide, “a further reach toward our better nature,”⁹⁶ as a “daily dose of meditation alters our biology and emotional life for the better.”⁹⁷ I trust that the findings have provided a contribution to the world of meditation. This is only the beginning of what can change our current climate.

By focusing on healthy clergy and their well-being we are sure to have healthier clergy following their call and being fruitful in their efforts. We cannot afford to ignore this pearl we have found in Preksha Meditation. Healthy clergy are a blessing to themselves, their families,

⁹⁴ Matthew 5:13

⁹⁵ Perkins,14.

⁹⁶ Goleman, Kindle,107.

⁹⁷ Ibid.,235.

their congregations and the overall community. They serve as a model for their denomination and by example make disciples. When pastors are vibrant with their calling, they are a special gift to all.

Appendix 1

Questionnaire Survey

Rosa Linda Guadarrama-**font has been changed to maintain the integrity of the one page survey.**

Questionnaire: Please check each question that applies to you and provide more input if you wish.

1. Have you ever meditated prior to today? ____ If so, how frequently? _____
2. Was it easy to meditate? _____ Was it beneficial? _____
3. Did you find the experience helpful? _____
4. Did the experience make you more aware of God's presence? _____
5. Did the exercise help your prayer life? _____
6. How did you feel before the meditation experience? _____
7. How did you feel after the meditation experience? _____
8. Do you feel healthier as a result of the meditation experience? _____
9. Did you feel a sense of increased clarity after the exercise? _____
10. Did the exercise serve as a "boost" to continue with your ministry? _____
11. What could improve the experience? _____
12. Will you continue to use meditation to build upon your spiritual care and wellbeing? ____

Personal:

Male _____ Female _____ Date: _____

Under 30 _____ 31-40 _____ 41-50 _____ 51-60 _____ Over 60 _____

Position: Pastor _____ Deacon _____ Lay Leader _____ Other _____

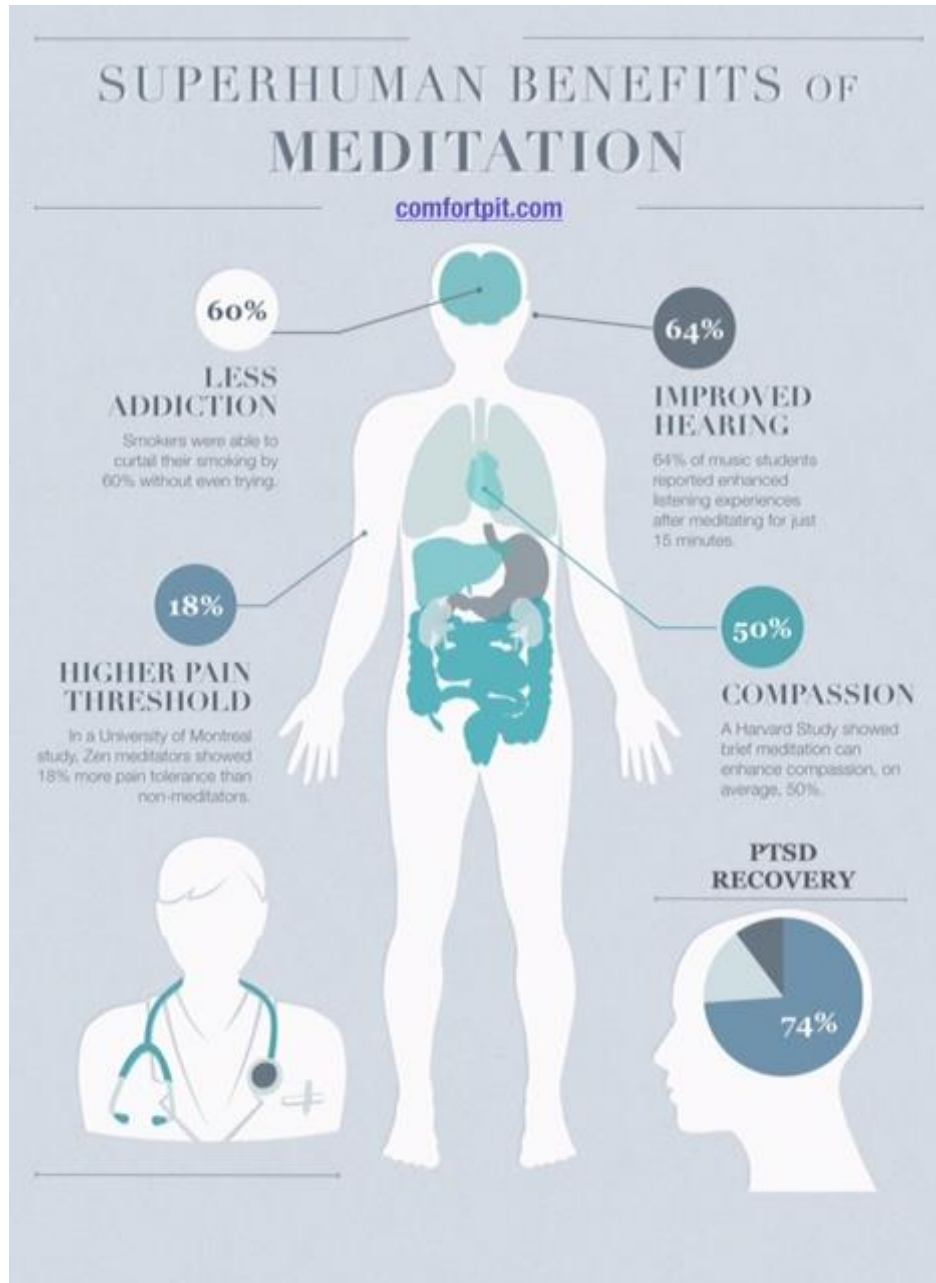
How many years have you been in service? _____

What state do you reside in? _____

Your comments are greatly appreciated.

Appendix 2

Visual of the “superhuman benefits of meditation” as provided by comfortpit.com



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